THE GREAT MIRAGE

JAMES L. FORD



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[See page 154

"IN CLOTHES THAT YOU PAID FOR . . . EATING AND DRINKING AND LAUGHING."

THE GREAT MIRAGE

A NOVEL OF
THE CITY UNDERNEATH IT

BY

JAMES L. FORD
AUTHOR OF
"THE LITERARY SHOP" "THE BRAZEN CALF"
"THE WOOING OF FOLLY" ETC.



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXV

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED JANUARY, 1915
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CHAPTER I

ON a certain clear, bracing afternoon in early October a young girl stood at the front door of a pretty, old-fashioned white cottage and, shading her eyes with her hand, looked anxiously down the dusty road that led to the bustling town a quarter of a mile away. A single great elm spread its limbs over the lowly roof of the cottage and threw a pattern of flickering shadows across the well-kept beds of cosmos, salvia, marigolds, and other flowers of an elder day. In its air of neatness, self-respect, and thrift the house suggested a New England village rather than the outskirts of a Mohawk Valley manufacturing-town; and a glimpse of its prim, old-fashioned parlor furnished in black walnut and horsehair, with here and there a bit of shining old mahogany, and its exquisitely clean kitchen, with its glistening rows of tinware, its well-worn rag carpet and comfortable, deep-cushioned arm-chair by the sunny window, would have sustained that illusion in the mind of any experienced traveler.

The young girl standing in the doorway was about twenty-two, and, although not beautiful according

to the standard that measures the exact proportions of nose, chin, and eyebrows, was nevertheless distinctly attractive. Her mouth was firm, small, and obviously designed for something better than mere conversation; her face, grave and thoughtful in repose, broke into dimples when she smiled; her eyes were of deep gray, suggestive of honesty, loyalty, and clear vision—the sort of eyes that command men's respect and oftentimes awaken love. Evidently a girl not easily won, but well worth the wooing.

Her figure was of medium height and of an alluring mold that was somehow not quite in keeping with the clear, gray eyes and rather serious face. A tight-fitting jacket revealed the contour of her full, rounded bust, and she seemed to taper from her hips to the tips of her slim russet shoes. Her hands were small but, it was plain to see, not unaccustomed to work. There was a marked resemblance between her and the elderly woman who sat knitting in the little parlor, with the cat purring contentedly at her feet, the clock on the mantelpiece ticking off the seconds, and the afternoon sun throwing long beams of light across the floor.

The Cravens had come to Graytown many years before from New Hampshire, lured by the liberal salary offered the father and husband as superintendent of one of the local factories; and his death, when Kate, his daughter, was well into her teens, had left them anchored there with the home and an income of a very few hundreds a year. On this they had contrived to live, doing their own housework, making their own dresses, caring for their own garden, and even managing to carry a few eggs to the

grocer each week as a partial offset to their modest account. They had brought with them from their old home among the hills, along with their furniture and china, an old-fashioned Yankee pride and reticence that baffled all inquisitiveness, and at the same time served to keep them somewhat aloof from their neighbors.

"Well, at least they've never found out just how poor we are!" was the comforting reflection in which the mother was wont to indulge herself.

Mrs. Craven and her daughter had never exactly fitted into the life of the town. Quite conscious of the fact that they were superior in birth and upbringing to those who ranked as their social equals, and too proud to seek the society of those who, chiefly by virtue of their holdings in mill stocks, deemed themselves the local aristocrats, the mother and the daughter had kept to themselves, forming no intimacies and seldom making or receiving visits. That their spare hours had not been altogether wasted was indicated by the diamond-paned mahogany bookcase where Emerson, Bancroft, Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Miss Yonge, and Jane Austen rubbed shoulders with such literary extremes as an old copy of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which neither mother nor daughter ever opened, and a score of good modern novels which both had hungrily devoured from cover to cover. For although there are many women of the better class who can get along without much food for the body, there are very few who will willingly starve the imagination; and these children of New England preferred to feed theirs with fiction, philosophy, and even a little poetry, rather than with the daily fare of petty gos-

sip, spiced with an occasional cheap melodrama or variety show, that sufficed for their neighbors.

From Kate Craven's earliest childhood her intimacy with her mother had been close and unusual, but a few months before the beginning of my story a cloud, bred of reticence on the part of the younger woman and suspicion on that of the elder, had come between them; and now, as the girl stood anxiously gazing down the long road, the mother sat eying her furtively and keenly while a look on her face told of a certain mild perturbation of spirit. In the eager gaze of the daughter and the anxiety of the mother even the dullest observer could scent an incipient love affair; and, in truth, Mrs. Craven realized that for the very first time in all her life Kate was interested in a man.

It had all come about so gradually and simply and naturally that it was not until Ned Penfield and Kate Craven, although not formally engaged, had entered into the state known as "an understanding" that the mother awoke to a bitter realization of what had happened. She had cherished high ambitions for her daughter. Secretly she had set aside, year after year, a sum of money which was now sufficient to enable her to send Kate to Boston for a whole year of study, after which she should choose whatever calling—nursing, teaching, or typewriting—she desired to follow. These occupations Mrs. Craven regarded as "fitting" for a self-respecting woman of decent American parentage. It is doubtful if even in her wildest dreams it had occurred to her that commercial pursuits of all kinds, besides such professions as journalism, literature, the stage, illustrating, medicine, and music, were now

open to just such girls as her own daughter. The world had moved on during the long years of her quiet life in the little elm-shaded cottage, and she had taken but scant heed of its progress. In admitting to herself that her daughter might, without sacrifice of family dignity or her own self-respect, take her place among the toilers of the other sex and earn her own living, it seemed to this simple, conscience-ridden daughter of the Pilgrims that she had almost compromised with the most sacred beliefs and prejudices of her caste. She little knew that the yeast of revolt was fermenting in Kate's breast; that her mind, stirred by a course of reading that had been wider and more radical and indiscriminate than her mother suspected, was now filled with inchoate dreams of a "career," as she called it; that her whole soul had come to loathe the narrow life of Graytown and to yearn after something worth working for. It would have been a terrible shock to Susan Craven could she have known at this time —as she did later—that Boston, to whose memory she had remained faithful during her long exile from New England, had long since been displaced in her daughter's fond imaginings by New York.

The mother had never spoken of the little fund that she had accumulated by Heaven alone knows what acts of parsimony and sacrifice; but now, as she watched her daughter entering from the front porch, her face beaming with happiness, she felt that the time had come to put the money to the use for which it had been intended. It might be that a change to other scenes and a broader life, with the inevitable contact with new ideas and new friends, would have its effect.

Mothers are said to have a quick eye where their daughters are concerned, but it sometimes happens that through lack of proper perspective they have livelier perceptions as to daughters not their own. Thus Susan Craven was so completely wrapped up in her own child that she had not yet learned that the latter's intimacy with Ned Penfield, taking, as it had, the conspicuous form of many long walks and drives about the country-side, had long been a subject of keen interest and a great deal of comment, for the most part enviously unflattering, among the young women of the town. For Penfield, with his regular features, bold black eyes, and "dashing appearance," as it was commonly termed, had made rapid headway in the good graces of the gentler and, so far as Graytown goes, the sharper sex during the two years in which he had lived and worked there. He had come from a larger town, and to the glamour of Syracuse was added that of his calling in the eyes of some of the more romantic and impressionable young women who fancied that they saw a future Dickens in this jaunty country reporter.

Kate Craven, more than all the others, had been impressed with his accomplishments as a budding man of letters. Brought up to read and to hold literature and authorship in profound respect, it is not strange that she should have been strongly attracted by the first writer it had been her fortune to know, and she devoured with eagerness every local item, editorial, and "news story" that came from his pen. It was this frank tribute to his talents and profession that first kindled in Penfield's breast that sense of gratified vanity which so closely re-

sembles the greatest of all human passions that the victim can seldom distinguish between the two. He began to talk to her about his work, to invite her criticism of the editorials on which he labored so zealously—he had high ambitions and dreams of his own—and finally to consult her on such matters as literary style and the proper use of words. It was generally believed in Graytown that Ned Penfield thought pretty well of himself and of his ability to turn a neat paragraph or wake the echoes of the country-side with an able editorial on state politics; but he was shrewd enough to recognize Kate Craven's superior literary knowledge and not above taking advantage of it.

In course of time he encouraged her to try her hand at writing editorial paragraphs and news items, and was amazed at the ease with which she put thought and fact into words, culled from what seemed to him a boundless vocabulary. Kate had been a reader of good literature all her life and had unconsciously acquired the habit of expressing herself tersely and in fitting terms, while Penfield, whose reading had been confined to newspapers and cheap novels, was merely a fluent writer of the language that has been aptly called "journalese."

Meanwhile, on this bright October day the *Weekly Eagle*, owned and conducted by Hiram Pardee, had gone to press, and Penfield, its local editor, was free for the afternoon. The proprietor himself would, according to his invariable custom, take charge of the sales and make out the bills for the advertising and job printing.

Penfield, though still diligent in his work, had become fascinated by the *mirage* of metropolitan

life that the sensational New York dailies set before his eyes each day in such alluring colors, and had shrewdly decided that the *Eagle* offered no opportunity worthy of his talents. New York was the field for him, and for Kate Craven, too, just so soon as a place could be made for her.

But the New York that Kate saw in her dreams was not the city of hard work, fierce rivalry, bitter envy, heartbreaking failure, and incredible possibilities toward which the youth of the whole country ever turns its eager, yearning eyes; but the New York created by the Sunday supplements of the sensational press, a town of easily gotten wealth and luxurious living; of picturesque slums in which "settlement workers," recruited from the ranks of fashion, toil ceaselessly and unselfishly for the poor; of a Wall Street inhabited by kings of finance who reward the faithful with wealth-producing "tips" on the stock-market; of a bright bohemian society in which actresses of radiant beauty chat brilliantly and unconventionally with artists, musicians, and authors of stupendous genius; of an exalted social caste composed of four hundred of the noblest and wealthiest, given over to elegant revels which the *hoi polloi* are privileged to gaze upon from afar in speechless wonder and delight.

This was the mirage that Kate Craven beheld in her dreams, this city of the yellow Sunday supplement, which she hoped to enter and capture.

Before leaving the office Penfield selected from the heap of exchanges beside his desk the Sunday supplement of the New York *Megaphone* and thrust it into his coat pocket. An hour later he was driving briskly down Main Street behind one of the

showiest livery horses in the town, while the citizens to whom he nodded jauntily said to one another, as they returned his greetings, "There's Ned Penfield going to take his girl out buggy-riding."

The young editor's salary was not more than a thousand a year, but his position on the press enabled him to get the best that the village afforded, and at the very smallest outlay of money. In return for these commercial favors he was always ready to serve those with whom he dealt by alluding in the columns of the *Eagle* to the high quality of their wares or their own personal charm. Thus in the issue of the day on which we see young Penfield starting gaily for the eastern end of the town fully a dozen paragraphs bore testimony to his transactions with his fellow-townsmen.

"Those oysters at Pat Cuddy's Exchange are just the cheese these cool evenings."

"The Mohawk Brewery has been running overtime ever since the first of last month, and no wonder, when we think of the sort of beer they brew. By the way, Jakey Schneider is the boy who knows how to keep and serve it."

"You'd better call on Charlie Hames early in the week if you want to take your lady friend out driving Sunday. As a general thing there isn't a rig of any description left in his stable by noon."

CHAPTER II

PENFIELD found Kate waiting for him at the gate of the little cottage, and they drove off gaily while Susan Craven watched them through the drawn blinds with troubled eyes until a bend in the road hid them from view. At the foot of a long hill the horse fell into a leisurely walk, and Kate unfolded the supplement and buried herself in its contents. Suddenly she exclaimed:

"That's a great article about Carolyn Smithers's salon. You know who she is—that rich young lady who moves in the Four Hundred and is always getting up clubs and leading movements of one sort or another. Now she's tired of society and is going to establish a salon like Madame de Staël's in her house on Madison Avenue, and make it a meeting-place for actors, musicians, painters, and the fashionable intellectual set. And it says that mere wealth will not be the passport to Miss Smithers's salon. Only cultivation and artistic reputation. I'm a different sort of girl since I began reading these New York papers. I never realized before how much is going on in the world and what chances there are for women to do big things. There's that big Woman's Betterment Society! I'll never be really contented until I can have a hand in it myself."

"And what's the Woman's Betterment Society?" inquired Penfield.

"Why, it's the great organization for improving the condition of women, raising their intellectual status, giving them opportunities for social advancement. It's the biggest thing ever done for our sex, and every time I read anything about it I wish I were able to help the work along. And that Mrs. Chilton-Smythe is a wonder. She's born right in the Four Hundred and is worth millions and millions, so she needn't do anything at all; yet she gives most of her time to the Betterment Society, and now it's the most important thing in the whole country. By the way, what did you have in the *Eagle* to-day about Sadie Hazelrigg's elopement?"

At the mention of this, the great local sensation of the week, Penfield's brow darkened, and he replied, sullenly: "The old man wouldn't let me print more than a stickful. If it had been my paper I'd have spread it all over the front page."

"Ned," exclaimed Kate, suddenly, "you're just wasting your time in this place! You and I between us could get up a wonderful story about Sadie Hazelrigg and her Dutch coachman. Ever since I've been going with you I've developed what you call a nose for news, and I fairly hate to see such an opportunity wasted. Oh, if we were only in New York now, both of us! Well, we're not! Which way shall we drive?"

"Let's go over to Glendale for supper; we'll have moonlight coming back," said Penfield.

It was five o'clock when they drew up in front of the little old-fashioned tavern whose fame as a place of refreshment had served to make the pretty village of Glendale the Mecca of pleasure parties from every part of the county. The landlord, who

had seen a reference to himself in the *Eagle* as "the very prince of bonifaces," came hurrying out to greet them.

"Well, I declare, Mr. Penfield!" he exclaimed, in professionally hearty and hospitable tones. "I was just saying to my wife this very morning that we hadn't seen you in a month of Sundays, and we was wondering whether you was mad or anything, that you didn't show up here no more. Needn't ask how you be, Miss Craven. Your good looks is the best answer. Step right in through the back entry, and you'll find my wife up to her elbows in preserves. You come along o' me, Mr. Penfield, and have a little nip o' rye to get the dust out of your throat."

"Well, I be glad to see you to-day," the landlady cried, with genuine delight, as Kate entered the kitchen. "Sit right down there and don't stir till you've told me every mite o' news you know; and what you don't know, Kitty Craven, ain't wuth knowin', I guess. But you'd oughter come to me long ago to find out about what that Hazelrigg gal was up to. Why, they've been a-comin' here together this three months or more. I knew what was goin' on ever since last August."

To which Kate made answer with an air of intense eagerness that went straight to the older woman's heart. "Well, if you know all about it you had better tell me, because all I know is what everybody knows. Begin right at the beginning, for I'm just dying to hear the whole story."

Thus conjured, Mrs. Perkins lowered her voice to the pitch demanded by revelations of such import and mystery as those with which her tongue was burdened, and, going back to the moment when she

herself had first said to her husband that she "never see Sadie Hazelrigg out driving or walking or riding but what that slick-looking coachman was snoopin' round somewheres," told the whole story of the love affair between mistress and servant as she had learned it by observation and hearsay.

"Where do you suppose they've gone to?" asked Kitty, as Mrs. Perkins paused for breath.

"They left here for New York; but it's my opinion they're stopping with his uncle who keeps a road-house at a place called Flatbush. I've got the address, for once I forwarded some mail to him."

At this moment Penfield called to her from the parlor, and Kate hastened to join him.

"I've got a scheme for you, Neddy!" she exclaimed. "Take the midnight express to New York, and in the morning go to the *Megaphone* and offer to write the whole story of the Hazelrigg case for them. I've just got it all from Mrs. Perkins, and, what's more, she knows where they're probably stopping. You ought to be able to write something that will make New York sit up and stare. You would, too, if I were there to help you. I'll do your work while you're away. With what I can pick up myself and you can turn in after you get back we'll have as good a newspaper as you've printed in a long time."

So it was settled that he should start for New York that night, leaving his sweetheart to fill his place to the best of her ability.

It was nearly eleven when the buggy stopped before the little white cottage. Susan Craven was awake and peering through the white-curtained window of her bedroom on the ground floor, after

the fashion of prudent mothers the world over, as Kate walked swiftly up the flagged walk to the side-door. And long after her daughter was asleep the elder woman remained wide awake, staring into the darkness.

Penfield reached New York at nine in the morning, and while ordering his breakfast sent for a copy of the *Megaphone* and was amazed to see nearly half a page devoted to the Hazelrigg elopement under the caption, "Gone with the Coachman." Bitterly disappointed by this bit of journalistic enterprise, his first thought was to return home at once and tell Kitty that the metropolitan pace was entirely too swift for a country reporter. Then he read the account carefully and found that it was a mere rehash of his own story in the *Eagle* telegraphed from Utica, to which had been added an exuberant description of the exalted status of the bride as a "leading member of the Four Hundred." The page was further embellished with authentic portraits of Miss Hazelrigg and her mother and another of the coachman which did not resemble him in any way—which is not surprising, as it was merely an old likeness of the French Prince Imperial with a livery, short side-whiskers, and hair brushed in front of his ears. There were also pictures of three young men of fashion, and a paragraph explaining that they were suitors for the young lady's hand. These had been added at the last moment, because it was seen that the page did not "balance" and needed more portraits to be thoroughly effective.

As nothing was printed about the present whereabouts of the couple, Penfield took new heart. As soon as he had finished his leisurely breakfast he

started for Park Row, and, following the directions of the hotel clerk, soon found himself walking briskly down Fifth Avenue, swinging his cane and gazing about him with keen interest and pleasure. He was surprised to find the thoroughfare which he had always pictured as the abode of exclusive fashion merely a street of shops. But the long vista to the north and south gave him a sense of the immensity of the city, while the animation of the scene, the throngs of well-dressed women—many of them, perhaps, members of the Four Hundred—the endless processions of carriages, automobiles, and delivery wagons, all evidences of money recklessly spent and therefore easily earned, appealed powerfully to his eager, receptive mind.

Broadway, into which he turned at Twenty-third Street, seemed to him a splendid seat of commerce, a distributing-point for merchandise of all kinds. Trucks laden with boxes and bales were coming and going, and as he glanced down the side-streets he could catch glimpses of porters loading and unloading them. Through the plate-glass windows of the huge wholesale stores he could see shelves and counters covered with rolls of cloth and cases of hats, bonnets, feathers, artificial flowers—everything, in short, that could be worn by man, woman, or child. The very signs over the doors seemed so bright, new, and rich in gold-leaf that they inspired him with hope, and it was a positive stimulus to his thoughts to note the sharp, eager faces of the salesmen who stood just inside the glass doors and even prowled up and down the sidewalk on the keen lookout for their natural prey, the out-of-town customer.

All unknowing, Edward Penfield absorbed during

his long walk down-town something of the spirit and flavor of the city in which he was destined to live and work. Knowing nothing of the history of the town, the sight of the gilt signs bearing names for the most part unknown in American commerce a dozen years before gave him none of that sense of gloom that they inspire in the hearts of those whose memories carry them back to the times when the old merchants, whose lives had been bound up in the growth of the city, dominated this very street—the days when rusty old signs bearing honored Anglo-Saxon names hung above these doors. Penfield liked new gilt signs because they glittered in the sunlight; nor was he hampered by memories of the past or respect for tradition. Essentially a man of the present, he was well qualified for a place in Park Row, where the cry is always for fresh young brains free from memories and traditions.

CHAPTER III

FAR down-town as we reckon nowadays in New York, yet within gun-shot of the building which within the memory of those now living contained the most important retail dry-goods shop of the town, is the wind-swept, crowded, hideously noisy and clanging street where wires come together from all parts of the world, and the work never ceases throughout the twenty-four hours of the day and the seven days of the week; a street that knows no seventh day or Sabbath in which it is unlawful to do any manner of work.

It is a street that is not without its influence, for it is here that the news of the world is brought in in innumerable streams along countless wires, treated by skilled mechanics called editors, and then disseminated in printed form throughout the land. Here also the dreams and ambitions of thousands of the youth of the country center, for they see in it the opportunity for careers of importance.

Behind the buildings and at their flanks are narrow streets choked with wagons and shaken by the constant jar of mighty machinery at work in cavernous depths below, whence clouds of steam come forth in fitful gusts through sidewalk gratings, where ragged urchins huddle together on cold nights for warmth and companionship.

It did not take Penfield long to find the building

for which he was looking. It breaks the sky-line of Park Row many stories above its immediate neighbors, an imposing monument to the zeal, ambition, and abilities of three generations of proprietors. For the New York *Daily Megaphone* is owned by Gaston Barshfield, son of Simon of the same surname and grandson of the world-famous Abraham, first of the line and founder of the extraordinary newspaper that still bears the imprint of his peculiar genius, though its character has been altered to suit the present feverish times. On the *Megaphone* premises Barshfield rules with the firm hand of an absolute but well-meaning monarch. His employees speak of him as the "great white Czar," and of his own private office as the throne-room. Like all sovereigns who rule by divine right, he is obliged to delegate much of his authority to his privy councilors.

The first Barshfield had been a firm believer in humanity, and had reposed implicit confidence in every subordinate whom he regarded with favor. His son and successor had believed in himself absolutely, to a moderate extent in the people, and in his employees not at all. Gaston, the present wearer of the crown, believes in neither the public nor his employees, and does not even regard himself seriously. It was he who called the newspaper offices of Park Row cook-shops, and likened the news to the contents of a kitchen pot, a simile apt enough to become immortal.

The first of the dynasty of Barshfield led public opinion; the second—a far more successful ruler than his father—kept abreast of it; the third and greatest of them all follows it slavishly as a dog follows his master. But he does it in such a way as

to convince his readers that he is actually influencing them, and, as he generally succeeds in agreeing with the majority of them, they are ready enough to concede his power and sagacity.

The young reporter could not have chosen a more auspicious time for his arrival in Park Row. It was not only the turning-point in his own career, but the psychological moment in the history of the *Megaphone*.

The *Daily Megaphone* and its present proprietor are so closely associated in the public mind that in speaking of either one always thinks of both. To arrive at any real understanding of Gaston Barshfield, and the newspaper which is generally regarded as the concrete expression of his complex personality, we must consider the methods of his European upbringing.

None knew better than Simon Barshfield, second in the royal line, the importance of the position which would be his son's by inheritance; none knew better than he the arts that would be employed to influence him in the conduct of his journal. From his own earliest childhood he had been accustomed to the idea of journalistic power by seeing the throngs of politicians, financiers, philanthropists, actors, singers, and women of society who were for ever dogging his father's footsteps. And these had paid their court to the son as well as to the father, for all the world as if the lad had been a young prince whose reign might begin at any moment. It was from influences of this sort that the second Barshfield desired to save his son, and it was mainly on this account that he determined to keep him abroad until his education was completed. The persons

whose wiles he most feared were his own employees, the members of the staff of the *Megaphone*, for he knew well enough that if a man skilled in that cunning and strategy which are found in the highest state of perfection only in a New York newspaper office once obtained the mastery of a comparatively young and inexperienced heir, it might be years before he would be strong enough to shake him off.

As Simon Barshfield made no secret of his own lack of confidence in the men whom he was compelled to intrust with the management of his affairs and the handling of his money, it is not to be wondered at that his son should have grown up in the belief that personal integrity was such a rare quality that it did not pay to hunt for it, and that it was much better to follow his father's example and seek only for men of ability without expecting to get any loyalty or honesty except of the merchantable kind.

Gaston Barshfield addresses the public precisely as a well-bred, agreeably cynical man of years, experience, and travel might be expected to address any woman who seemed worth his while. And where is the man of this sort who ever credited the feminine mind with reason? The *Megaphone* might be intended for feminine circulation only, so neat is its personal appearance, so bright and entertaining its columns, so full of gossip about society, the stage, fashions, and everything else that man regards as dear to the feminine heart. And with what delicious art does it set before its readers every detail of the most salacious scandals of the town! How grieved it is at the stern necessity that compels it to touch a topic so unsavory, one that must prove so revolting to the pure-minded! The *Megaphone* never

prints a scandal on its front page. Nor would a man of tact say to a woman in a crowded drawing-room all that he has to say to her. There are some things that he will save for the quiet of the tête-à-tête—things that will lose nothing by the saving.

Barshfield knows but one god, and his name is Circulation. As the sun-worshiper in the early morning turns reverently toward the east, so does Barshfield on arising from his bed call up his circulation manager on the telephone and ask how the paper is selling. During those periods of peaceful quiet and order—rare enough in the current life of the town—when citizens are going about their business without being held up or murdered, and when there are no scandals or crime mysteries to occupy the public mind, he loses something of his native evenness of temper and becomes melancholy, and at times even morose. It is then that he declares that the daily brew is not to the public's liking and that if some rich seasoning be not added they might as well shut up the cook-shop altogether. These are anxious days for the members of the staff. While the angel of peace is flapping his wings over the town, and the devout are giving thanks because neither pestilence nor "crime wave" is abroad, the employees of the *Megaphone*, from the highest to the lowest, are suffering the full weight of the royal displeasure. It is then that the city-room echoes with rumors of impending changes—rumors that frequently prove stern realities. It is then that the chief cooks hurry to and fro with nervous tread, shouting at the office-boys, summoning reporters, and sending them away on mysterious and often useless missions, and com-

muning together in a studied effort to impress their employer with their zeal.

But as a thunder-storm clears the atmosphere on a close summer day, so does crime, scandal, or disaster restore the low pulse of circulation, raise the drooping spirits of the sovereign, dispel gloom from the hearts of his immediate *entourage*, quicken the activities of the city-room, and turn the talk of the "old-timers" back to its usual channels of golden reminiscence.

It would be difficult to say what form of iniquity or horror gives the owner of the *Megaphone* the most pleasure or the circulation its strongest uplift. A flood or fire enables him to send out a relief-train in charge of a "heart interest" specialist, whose duty it is to distribute the various things contributed by those charitable persons who are not averse to seeing themselves in print, and to chronicle in fitting terms the tearful gratitude of the recipients. An embezzlement or divorce is also welcome in periods of depression, because it can be converted into a "daily feature," as Park Row terms a long-drawn-out agony. A murder or mysterious disappearance is also highly prized, but a local "crime wave," cleverly nursed by experts, will do as much to revive the drooping sales as anything that can be named.

It was in honor of this god of Circulation, whom he worships to the exclusion of all others—even that of Advertising, before whose altar so many newspaper proprietors prostrate themselves—that the third Barshfield erected the splendid temple on Park Row in which the *Megaphone* is housed, and fitted it with all the best and latest appliances for the collection, dissemination, and distortion of news

and its conversion into the great mirage that is visible from afar.

A whole floor of this building is given over to the city department, and another to the editorial rooms. On the floor above, Tops, the dean of the corps of office-boys, keeps ceaseless watch and ward at the door of the handsomely furnished room in which Majesty itself is enthroned. In this room are held the high councils, and it is here that audience is sometimes granted to the faithful. To this room only a very few of the most favored courtiers have ready access, and these fortunate ones seem to the rank and file of the city department to wear upon their brows some of the reflected glory of their sovereign.

Every day at precisely twelve o'clock, Tops, the ranking member of the office-boy corps, the Household troops of Park Row, stations himself before the door of the throne-room, there to await the coming of royalty. Tidings of the royal advent spread quickly throughout the building, and are made known not only by the prompt doubling of the guard of office-boys, but by the hurry and bustle among the courtiers and the excitement that stirs the ranks of those who have been waiting in the outer hall in the hope of being ushered into the presence.

At the time of which I write there are but two for whom the doors of the throne-room swing freely. One of these is Vanderlip, the managing editor; the other is Macy, the city editor. It is believed in the city-room that they are mutually hostile to and jealous of each other, and that by cunningly dividing his confidence and favor between the two Barshfield maintains the balance of power in the statecraft of

the office. It is believed, also, that each one receives the same prodigious salary, the exact amount of which can only be guessed at, as the grave does not guard its secrets more carefully than does the Park Row cashier those of his salary list.

Macy owes his position to his skill as a news-gatherer. Not only is he thoroughly familiar with every one of the regular sources of news supply, but he also possesses an extraordinary knowledge of the peculiar qualities of every one of the herbs and fungi of sensationalism that attain such a luxuriant growth in metropolitan highways and byways. He knows also the many out-of-the-way places in which these things are to be found at all seasons of the year, and it is this knowledge more than anything else that has served to endear him to his employer, for the latter knows well that in a moment of emergency he can always depend on Macy to send out and procure some morsel of scandal or gossip in precisely the right stage of decay, that with a little judicious par-boiling can be made to lend to the pot the necessary rich taste.

And as Macy excels in the art of gathering ingredients for the pot, so does Vanderlip understand that of cooking them to suit the taste of his employer and presumably that of the public as well. His judgment of the relative value of the different lumps of sensation that figure in each morning's brew is unsurpassed. In assigning one to a conspicuous place on the front page and relegating another in condensed form to an obscure corner under the little-read column called "Religious Intelligence," he has never been known to err. He has a masterly skill in imparting to the entire contents of

the pot that rich, gamy flavor that his public finds so palatable. In brief, it is Macy who collects the news and Vanderlip who prepares it for consumption.

With his interests guarded by two such able and zealous counselors, both mutually distrustful of each other, yet each unswerving in his allegiance to his chief, Barshfield's lot among newspaper proprietors might well be regarded as an enviable one; yet at the very moment of Penfield's arrival in town a vague feeling of discontent is forming in his mind. Things are running so smoothly in the *Megaphone* office that he cannot rid himself of the suspicion that something is wrong. It is some weeks since Macy has hinted that Vanderlip's hand has lost much of its old-time cunning, or Vanderlip has reluctantly admitted that Macy is "his own worst enemy."

In such moments of peace it is Barshfield's practice to prepare for war, and so it happens that at the very moment when he is casting a speculative eye over the members of his staff Ned Penfield comes knocking at his gates.

CHAPTER IV

THE city editor, to whom an office-boy bore Penfield's card, consented to receive him, and inquired rather brusquely what he could do for him. He thawed out when the visitor explained his errand, remarking that he thought he knew where to find the eloping couple, and adding that he was acquainted with both bride and bridegroom.

"Go ahead and find them," said Macy, "and give us a two-column story about them. We're all at sea here, because no one on the staff knows them by sight. Don't lose any time about it, either, for every paper in town has at least three men out on it now, and I want to get an exclusive story if it's a possible thing. Get a move on you, and have your copy in as early as you can."

Penfield turned to go, and Macy followed him to the hall to offer a few final words of advice and encouragement, finishing with the suggestion that he take a cab; and it was with the injunction to "make a big story with plenty of heart interest in it" ringing in his ears that Ned Penfield scurried down the *Megaphone* stairs and ran rapidly along Park Row to the bridge entrance. He knew that the work that had been intrusted to him was important, but he was not sufficiently familiar with Park Row and the habits of city editors to grasp the full significance of Mr. Macy's injunction to "take a cab."

When a seasoned reporter is told to indulge in such an extravagance his heart sinks within him, because he knows not only that the assignment is regarded as a very difficult one, but also that if he comes back and admits himself baffled the cab will be thrown in his face, and the city editor will wonder how it is possible that a man who is permitted to draw upon the office treasury to the extent of two dollars for luxurious travel can fail to get the information that he seeks. In other words, the city editor bestows the cab as the Spartan mother bestowed the shield: "Come home with it or on it."

Not far from the eastern entrance to Prospect Park Penfield found the road-house. The half-dozen tubs of evergreens that stood in the glazed end of the piazza showed that the place was kept by a German. The bar-room was almost empty when he entered, and he knew by the sound of clattering knives and forks that dinner was going on in an adjoining room. Having purchased a cigar, he strolled out on the piazza, and as he passed the dining-room window he cast a searching glance at the company within, and there beheld Sadie Hazelrigg, that was, seated beside her coachman husband, with the German publican at one end of the table and his stout wife at the other.

For fully ten minutes Edward Penfield continued his walk up and down the broad piazza of the little roadside hotel, making up his mind what was the best course to pursue, and realizing more keenly than he ever had before how necessary Kitty Craven had become to him.

"If Kitty were here now," he said to himself, "she would know exactly what I ought to do, and

this may be the very turning-point in my whole career."

At this point in his reflections the supper party broke up, the two women withdrawing to their rooms on the upper floor, while the men passed into the bar-room. A moment later Penfield heard the front door slam and saw the coachman, with a long cigar between his teeth, walking briskly along the piazza. As the two men approached each other the bridegroom stopped, open-eyed with astonishment, while the reporter advanced with a pleasant smile of recognition on his face and exclaimed:

"Well, how do you do, Fritz? You went away from Graytown so suddenly that I didn't have time to congratulate you. I wish you all the joy in the world, old man."

The German extended a rather reluctant hand and replied simply: "You don't bring much notice in the *Eagle* about us. Why was that? Did you see the *Megaphone* to-day? A whole page already; but that picture of me is not right, and my wife looks so ugly. Is there no way I could make them bring a good picture? I was ashamed to send that paper to my sister in Germany. And those dudes, why did they put them there? My wife swears that she never knew one of them, though I choked her to make her tell. Do you know one of those editors on that *Megaphone* paper? I would call on him and even let the artist make a picture of me."

Here, indeed, was a golden opportunity, and it did not take long for Penfield to persuade the bridegroom—who was tasting for the first time in his life the delicious intoxicant of newspaper notoriety

—to go with him to the *Megaphone* office. In the city-room he found Mr. Macy, whose face literally beamed with joy when Penfield introduced the coachman and the latter began his querulous complaint about the picture. For once in a city editor's lifetime a reporter had gone out in a cab and come back with something.

Mr. Macy himself escorted the German to the art department and commanded one of the artists to make a full-length picture of him.

"And don't put hairs before my ears, as in the picture you brought this morning," pleaded the bridegroom, as he assumed a dignified pose, with his hand resting negligently on the table.

Meanwhile another artist, working from descriptions furnished by Penfield, was making a picture of the road-house in which the elopers were hidden, while a third prepared portraits of the innkeeper and his wife.

"Say, Dutchy, what sort of a looking party is that aunt of yours?" inquired the last-named, as he briskly sharpened his pencil.

"She is quite a stout lady mit gold spectacles, and curls beside her face, and a large bosom pin mit a picture of her fader on it. Her hair is dark, and don't forget to put *gold* spectacles."

"All right," replied the draftsman, cheerfully, "I'll make a mark so the man who puts the colors on will know." And with these words he selected from a large drawer in his desk the portrait of a well-known Philadelphia dowager, added a pair of side-curls of the old-fashioned variety to her face, and placed broad-bowed spectacles on her nose. The bosom pin was quickly drawn, and a few moments

later the portrait of an absconding bank-cashier was transformed into the German innkeeper, and his nationality delicately indicated by means of a long porcelain pipe, carefully traced from the *Fliegende Blätter*, and a mug of foaming beer.

Having seen that the art hands were in train to do their worst, Macy escorted Penfield to a desk in the city-room and bade him write as much as he possibly could about his search and the discovery of the couple.

"Describe the Dutch hotel and compare it with her father's house up in the country. What you want to show is that this girl comes of a gilt-edged family, and has been brought up by doting parents to have everything she hollered for. Give her plenty of sealskin sacques and diamonds, and work the Four Hundred racket. Then show what she's come to. Describe the family sitting down at the supper-table, and don't forget the sauerkraut and the steaming frankfurters. After supper she puts on an apron and washes the dishes, singing merrily at her work. In the morning when her husband goes out to hunt for a job she kisses him good-by and says, 'Hans' or 'Fritz,' or whatever the hell his name is, 'do not be discouraged if you fail again to-day, for I still love you.' Be sure and make her happy, because if you don't there won't be any heart interest in the story. Have her singing and smiling all the time she's peeling potatoes. It would be a good idea to have her sit down at the parlor organ in the evening, after the business of the day is over, and touch the simple hearts of the good old innkeeper and his wife by singing some hellish yodels that carry them back to the happy days on the vine-clad slopes of

the Rhine. And all the time make her happy. Do you understand?"

"Indeed, I do," replied Penfield, as he took up his pen, for he knew now that he was on safe ground and that his reporter's sense would carry him through.

Edward Penfield was what city editors call a "born reporter," a term generally used to characterize that peculiar blend of ignorance and enthusiasm which can be found in its finest flower in the offices about Park Row. Without any real literary skill save the coarsest, he had a certain sense of the value of contrasts which enabled him to make his effects in a broad and striking manner. Now, having been started on the right track by Mr. Macy, he threw himself into the work of describing the Hazelrigg elopement with a zeal that soon ripened into genuine pleasure.

When Macy reached the office next day he found Penfield waiting for him. The young man wasted no time in stating his wish to go to work regularly on the *Megaphone*.

"Well," said the city editor, after a moment's thought, "I'm willing to give you a try on the strength of what you've done. You can go to work on space, with a guarantee of thirty-five dollars a week."

It seemed to Edward Penfield that he had suddenly planted his feet on the highway that led toward wealth and distinction, and without a moment's demur he accepted the offer, asking only to be allowed to go up to Graytown and arrange his affairs there.

He surprised Kate by appearing before her early

one Sunday morning, and when he had announced his intention of joining the staff of the *Megaphone* she flung her arms around his neck and kissed him, thus giving him a more complete as well as an infinitely more delightful surprise than he had given her, for Kate was chary of such favors.

"And now the next thing is to get you down there," he said, as he seated himself beside her and took her hand in his. "I've simply got to have you, Kitty; that's all there is about it! Will you come?"

"Yes," she said, tentatively, for it seemed to her that he might have been a little more explicit in his manner of asking; "I'd give anything to go down to New York and see what I can make of myself."

"And so you shall, Kitty, if I can possibly do it!" he exclaimed, earnestly and with real sincerity, for he was thinking of how she might help him. That he could be expected to make her any definite offer or promise of an intimate personal nature did not enter his mind. The knowledge that she cared for no one save himself left him free to devote his attention exclusively to his own affairs. There would be time enough for a closer union in the future—if he cared for it. And Kate, regretting now that she had kissed him so fervently, or perhaps disappointed that her sudden yielding to an affectionate prompting had met with such a careless response, assumed her usual attitude of an interested and wisely counseling listener as he unfolded, in words glowing with hope and enthusiasm, his plans for what he called his "journalistic career."

Mrs. Craven was surprised and greatly relieved to see how contentedly and pleasantly Kate fell back into the old routine after Penfield's departure. To

all outward appearances the girl had taken up her old life of simple domesticity with complete satisfaction and was prepared to live it out until the end. It was possible, of course, that in due time she would marry, but this event Susan Craven hoped would be deferred as long as possible. Certainly there was no young man in Graytown whom she could tolerate, even in imagination, as a son-in-law.

But if Susan Craven could have looked into her daughter's soul and seen how completely the dream of a "life-work" in New York had taken possession of her, and the manner in which she was already planning and working for its realization, it is doubtful if she would have been satisfied to enjoy her sense of security. Her maternal instinct led her to believe that Kate was not in love with Penfield or any other man to a dangerous degree, but she never realized that the girl was in love with an idea.

Meanwhile old man Pardee was finding it difficult to break in a new local editor, and was glad to take two or three columns of local gossip and editorial matter from Kate, for which he allowed her the sum of ten dollars a week, half of which she gave to her mother for household expenses. The remainder she laid aside for future use. For the dream of a metropolitan career had taken complete possession of her soul.

It was in this spirit of adventure, and not through any interest in the affairs of her neighbors, that she threw herself into the work on the *Eagle* with a zeal and discretion that won the grudging approval of Hiram Pardee, and went far toward upsetting his ingrained belief that women "didn't belong" in newspaper offices. Moreover, she had already

reached the conclusion that the profession of writing offered more advantages and opportunities than any other, as it was one in which women were on terms of equality with men. It was one, too, for which she had been trained in a way by her lifelong habit of reading; nor did the possibility of one day wielding an influential pen in behalf of her sex escape her mind.

And all this time she was in constant correspondence with Ned Penfield. Her mother suspected it, but asked no questions, though there were times when she yearned for her daughter's full and complete confidence, such as had been hers until this country reporter came between them. It would have greatly relieved Mrs. Craven's mind could she have read one of those long, closely written letters that reached the Graytown post-office by the Monday-morning mail or the still longer ones that Kate was wont to send in reply. There was very little love-making in the pages of either. Penfield's were confined principally to accounts of his work on the paper coupled with appeals to Kate for advice and aid. Whenever time allowed he sent her his Sunday stories in manuscript, asking her to criticize and suggest improvements. These she would read and return with such memoranda as her fertile feminine instinct and imagination might suggest, and he never failed to profit by her counsel.

That this young country girl, entirely inexperienced in city ways, could offer valuable advice to a clever newspaper reporter who was rapidly making his way in New York may seem inexplicable. But it should be remembered that she had been such a diligent reader of Sunday supplements that she

had come to view everything from the peculiar standpoint of Park Row. Moreover, she was fast acquiring proficiency in the art of imparting to Penfield's manuscripts those fine feminine touches which, although neither of them knew it, appealed so powerfully to Barshfield's erratic fancy.

Indeed, one of the pet theories of the *Megaphone's* owner was that only through the combined efforts of a man and a woman could the best results in newspaper writing be achieved. On occasions of importance he always ordered that a man should write the story from the "news point" and a woman supply the emotional and sentimental element termed "heart interest."

It was the frequent touches of womanliness in Penfield's work that attracted Barshfield's notice and at the same time surprised him, for femininity seemed entirely foreign to this energetic brassy young provincial who stopped at nothing that his duty to the paper called for. Sometimes, it is true, this womanly element was absent when it was most needed and when Barshfield fully expected to find it. But give Penfield time—time enough to send his manuscript to Kate for revision—and he was sure to turn in something flavored with precisely the quality that suited the palate of the *Megaphone's* proprietor.

CHAPTER V

LATE in the afternoon of one of those hazy autumn days that serve to endear early November to us, a sudden murmur and bustle about the throne-room of the *Megaphone* indicated to the knowing ones the arrival of royalty. By a quick requisition on the household reserves in the city-room, the guard before the door was doubled, as became the situation, and in a few moments messengers were scurrying in every direction, and Tops was bustling in and out in response to the sharp calls of the royal bell.

It is the custom in Park Row to denote the presence of royalty by exhibitions of activity accompanied by suggestions of unspeakable mystery on the part of those having access to the Presence or attached to the Person of Majesty. Tops knows this so well that at the first sound of the royal bell he always rings for two district messengers before calling out the guard. Even if there is no immediate demand for their services it lends to the occasion an air of life and color, besides producing a favorable impression on those waiting in the hall, to have the uniformed boys coming and going and leaning against the walls.

There were fully a score of waiting ones this hazy afternoon, and it was on that account, perhaps, that Barshfield did not pass through the crowded hall,

but made his way to his own office through a chain of others.

"Get rid of them as soon as possible," he said to Tops, without even glancing at the cards that that diligent officer offered for his inspection. Whereupon the obedient Tops went out into the corridor and addressed the assembled multitude, saying that Mr. Barshfield was very busy to-day with a very important party which had come all the way from Asia to see him about some extra particular business, and he (Tops) didn't think he'd be able to see anybody till to-morrow. A moment later he was in quest of Mr. Macy, whose presence was desired in the throne-room immediately.

Barshfield was retasting the morning's brew with wise and critical palate when the city editor entered the office. He must have found it to his liking, for he looked up from his desk and said, with a cordial smile:

"A pretty good paper this morning, Mr. Macy, considering the fact that you had scarcely anything to work on. I must say, though, that I don't care very much for that evicted family as a daily feature. It strikes me as a little too commonplace for us. There's nothing in an eviction unless it has some original feature that we can work on. You'd better let them go with perhaps a half-column story about their gratitude to the *Megaphone*."

"But the story *has* a special feature," replied the city editor. "I've just learned that the property is owned by old Cornelius Ruggles, who's rich as mud and a vestryman of a swell church up-town. You may remember that we ran a three-column picture of him about six weeks ago at the time he gave a

quarter of a million to some hospital or something."

"So that's the cruel landlord, is it?" exclaimed Barshfield, with a visible increase of interest. "That *is* something to work on. Let's see; how does the story stand now? Are they still out in the street?"

"Yes," retorted Macy, laconically; "out on the sidewalk with their stuff, and they're to sleep on it so long as we keep them full of beer."

"That's good," said Barshfield, approvingly, as he offered his case of gold-tipped cigarettes and lighted one himself. "Make a half-page story of it for Sunday with a picture of them sitting on their pots and pans, the father with his head buried in his hands, the old woman telling her beads, and all the children—"

"There's only one child," interrupted Macy.

"One isn't enough for a story like this!" exclaimed Barshfield, decisively. "Make a lot of them with hollow faces like those young ones in the pictures of the striking weavers' families that we ran last week. Surely, Mr. Macy, you've been on the *Megaphone* long enough to know what a starving family looks like!"

"I know what they look like in the *Megaphone;* they all look alike there," rejoined Macy, dryly. "They all have precisely the same children, too," he added. "Don't you think we could fit this one out with a new set?"

"No," rejoined Barshfield, gravely; "the public have become attached to these children and would resent any attempt to palm off any new ones on them. Run the same old group and give it a good religious caption like 'the poor ye have always with

ye,' and then have another picture showing Ruggles walking down the aisle of the church with a silk hat in his hand and a sanctimonious look on his face. A good caption for that would be 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' Anyway, take something out of the Bible and don't forget to have the old woman going over her string of beads. If she hasn't got any give her some, because the family must stand for everything that we print about them. They understand that, don't they?"

"Oh, they'll stand for it as long as we keep them in beer and take up subscriptions for them," said Macy, with a smile of amusement on his face. "They're the envy of the whole neighborhood as it is. But I don't think the public will quite stand for a string of beads."

"Why not?" demanded Barshfield.

"Because," replied the city editor, "their name is Rosenthal."

Macy's smile found itself reflected in the face of the proprietor of the *Megaphone*, who, by no means deficient in the sense of humor, made answer:

"Well, let them display some sort of religious emblem. It always gives tone to extreme destitution to show a cross or a string of beads or something of that sort. By the way, the story this morning was uncommonly well done. Who's out on it?"

"A man named Penfield. This is his first job in New York. I'm told he had quite a local reputation up the state. It was he that did that elopement story for us last fall."

"You say he was a country reporter before he came to us?" remarked Barshfield, thoughtfully. "Well, I've always believed that a man who could

make any sort of reputation on one of those little country weeklies could do big things on a New York daily."

As a matter of fact, Barshfield had been quietly watching Penfield's work ever since his attention had been drawn to it by his masterly account of the Hazelrigg elopement the year before. He had noted his growing capacity for reportorial work of the highest order—or what passed for the highest order in the *Megaphone* office—and had already reached the conclusion that this raw young country reporter had in him the stuff from which good city editors are made. Of this he had said not a word to either of his two favorite henchmen, knowing only too well that they were ready to make common cause against any one whom he regarded with special favor or interest.

At nine o'clock that same evening Penfield, returning from an assignment, was told by the city editor that Mr. Vanderlip wished to see him. Greatly marveling, he made his way into the private office of the privy councilor. Mr. Vanderlip was sitting before his superb mahogany roll-top desk with a cigarette in his mouth and a proof-slip in his hand.

"You are the Mr. Penfield who has been handling that eviction story?" he said, in a tone that was at least reassuring. "Now, we want to make a big story on it in the Sunday paper, with pictures of the capitalist going to church while his poor tenants starve in the streets. Make anywhere from two and a half to three columns—enough to make a page story with pictures—and be sure you lay it on thick about the church end of it, taking care not to offend the religious element."

"How are we to avoid offending them if we pound hard on the church part of it?" he inquired.

"Treat it from a high moral standpoint," replied Vanderlip, quickly. "Interview clergymen of different denominations and get them to stand for some sort of an expression of righteous indignation at the hypocrisy of a man who, while professing piety, turns a deaf ear to the wailings of the distressed. Turn your story in to me instead of to Mr. Macy, and have it here as early to-morrow evening as you possibly can."

Without further delay Penfield started out in search of ecclesiastical indorsement of the *Megaphone's* noble humanitarianism in succoring the unfortunate victims of capitalistic tyranny. He carried in his pocket the typewritten list of clergymen who liked to get their names in the paper, which was one of the properties of the city-room, and his first call was on the Rev. Henry Westmoreton, D.D., who received him with much cordiality and offered him a cigar before proceeding to business. He listened with the closest attention while his visitor told his story, but at the mention of the landlord's name he started and exclaimed.

"What! You don't mean Mr. Ruggles, the philanthropist, do you?"

"I believe that's the one, sir," replied Penfield. "That is to say, he gives to hospitals and asylums, but if you were to see this unfortunate family sitting out on the street among their household effects I don't think you'd call him a philanthropist. Why, sir, it is one of the saddest sights the town has ever seen, and with it all they're so quiet and prayerful."

"I'm afraid you'll have to let me off this time,

young man," said Dr. Westmoreton, in a soft, sad voice and with a deprecatory smile on his face. "You see, it doesn't quite do for a clergyman to be too harsh in his criticisms of others. This Mr. Ruggles, you know, belongs to another church, and"—his voice grew firmer as he clutched at the straw that had providentially floated his way—"if I were to go out of my way to attack him for his business methods a great many censorious persons might say that I did it because he was not of my own religious belief. Now, during all my twenty-five years in the ministry I have been noted for my liberality toward other denominations, and about a year ago I actually preached a sermon in praise of the Jews. No, my dear young friend, I would much rather indorse something else, and I am sure that your employer, whom I have the pleasure of knowing slightly and who seems to be a man of extraordinary diligence in well-doing, will very soon embark on some crusade which I could indorse more heartily than I can this. Please say that to Mr. Barshfield, with my compliments, won't you, my dear Mr. Penfield, and ask him, in view of the very embarrassing position in which it would place me, to excuse me this time. I am very glad to have seen you—take another of these cigars to smoke on your way down—and I should like very much to see you at our Friday-evening services, which are designed especially for young people of both sexes. They begin at eight and last till about a quarter past nine, and if you'd like to step into the vestry afterward, just to say 'how-dy-do' and have a little chat, I should be very glad to see you." And with these gracious words the rector courteously bowed his visitor out.

"I guess I'll take an easy one this time," said Penfield, as he stood on the rectory steps scanning the typewritten list of divines; and straightway he betook himself to the house of the Rev. Eleazur Simpson, a clerical "hustler" of the most advanced type. As soon as Mr. Simpson discovered that his visitor was a reporter and not an alms-seeker he invited him into his study and listened with a look of eager approval on his face while Penfield unfolded his tale of the persecution of the poor by the rich. Mr. Simpson was a young man of limitless fervor and short stature, who stood so straight that in nautical parlance he may be said to have "raked aft." He had pale-blue eyes, a large mouth, and straggling, reddish side-whiskers of the kind that so frequently go cheek by jowl with agile piety. He had been a firm believer in vigorous methods from the moment of his installation as pastor of a small and struggling church, and during his four years' ministry both his fame and his congregation had increased to a noteworthy degree. Mr. Simpson owed a large share of his popularity and renown to his skill in choosing subjects of current interest as themes for his sermons. He was also a veritable adept in the enviable art of getting his sermons reported in the daily papers, and it was his habit to preach at least once a year a sermon in praise of that beneficent institution, the modern Sunday newspaper, which he declared was the "people's pulpit"; and this bit of alliteration was invariably copied and favorably commented upon by a grateful profession.

Floating about somewhere in Mr. Simpson's head were various odds and ends of socialistic theories which he regarded with favor because they were cer-

tainly "up to date," as he would have expressed it, and were useful as an occasional flavoring to some sermon on the "Lesson of the Great Strike" or the "Volcano Under the City's Crust." As he listened to his visitor's account of the eviction of the Rosenthal family he saw his opportunity for a discourse that the *Megaphone* would certainly describe in its Monday issue as a "fearless handling of a momentous question."

In the language of both press and pulpit, to "handle a subject fearlessly" means to treat it in such a way as to tickle everybody's vanity.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, for calling my attention to this most unchristian act on the part of a man whose sincerity I have already had reason to question." (Mr. Ruggles had refused point-blank to give anything to Mr. Simpson's church.) "You can say to Mr. Barshfield that his crusade in the interest of true humanity has my hearty sympathy, and that I shall take pains to refer to the subject in my sermon next Sunday. Indeed, I think it would be a good idea if the *Megaphone* were to send a shorthand reporter to take down my discourse, or, better still, I can send you personally on Saturday morning a typewritten copy of those portions of it that bear on the subject. Let me see; there are about eighteen hundred words in one of your columns, I believe. Suppose I send you two thousand, and that, with your own introduction, will make a good column and a half; or even more, if you see fit."

"I may quote you, then, as sympathizing heartily with our efforts to alleviate suffering?" said Penfield, as he rose to go.

"Certainly," rejoined the clergyman; "and remember that I preach on the subject next Sunday. Don't forget to put that in. Have you seen my latest photograph? You might as well take it with you; it will come in handy, perhaps, in reporting me next Monday. Good day, sir, and God bless you for the great work you are doing for humanity."

Penfield's next call was on the Rev. Horace Brittain, a slender, hollow-cheeked man in rigid clerical attire, whose face and manner betokened the most intense earnestness. Mr. Brittain was the rector of a church which had gained some fame in the newspapers because of its ritualistic tendencies, and for this reason alone his name had been added to the list of clergymen in the city department. Penfield had not addressed more than a score of words to him before he stopped him peremptorily:

"You may say to the proprietor of the *Megaphone* that under no condition will I permit the use of my name for the furtherance of any of his outrageous projects. He forgets when he sends to me that my church has a mission on the very street in which this eviction occurred, and that no one knows better than I do the evils that result from the contemptible schemes for self-advertisement which he has the audacity to palm off on the public as works of charity. And you may say to him also that I know of nothing more harmful than these attempts to stir up the poor against the rich. Now, sir, you have my answer. And I will add that I am sorry to see a young man of your apparent intelligence engaged in such an unwholesome work. I have the honor to wish you good day, sir."

And the Rev. Horace Brittain stood up to his full

height, looked his visitor straight in the face with eyes that seemed to blaze with indignation, and even caused the latter to feel a little ashamed of himself and his work as he made his way into the street.

"There's a crank that don't belong on the list," said Penfield, as he made a mark against the name of the Rev. Horace Brittain. "I'll tell Macy to scratch it off so as to save the boys as much shoe-leather as possible."

Penfield's last call was on a well-known Park Row character called "Father Rooney," whom he found late in the day in his accustomed corner of Park Row's favorite public house, known as the Brasserie of Hard Times. Rooney belonged to the great army of unattached scavengers who gain a precarious living through the odd bits of fat and carrion which they pick up here and there and sell to the Park Row cook-shops. On the strength of having once been a minister, and being always willing to talk on any subject and express any shade of opinion that might be desired, he usually figured in interviews as a "liberal Christian." In cook-shop parlance, a broad-minded man is one who is ready to believe anything, while a liberal man is simply liberal in speech. He does not have to give away anything to acquire that distinction. A wise church had long since unfrocked Father Rooney, but had never been able to "silence" him.

Rooney not only agreed to write out at space rates an interview with himself, expressive of his abhorrence at the iniquitous work of the capitalist, but suggested that it would be a good idea to have him put on the clerical garb which he still wore on

occasion and go up to the afflicted Rosenthals with a basket of provisions on his arm, for which he stipulated he should have an extra "five-spot." A photographer should be on hand, and he had no objection to kneeling on the pavement and offering a short prayer. He was sure that would make a fine picture—"the worthy parish priest praying for the unfortunate Hebrews."

The idea appealed strongly to Penfield's sense of smell or "news instinct," as it is termed in Park Row kitchens. It was also thoroughly in keeping with the "broad-minded" scheme of well-doing that had always formed such an important element in Barshfield's policy.

"But what would you pray for?" he inquired of Rooney.

"What the hell difference does that make?" rejoined the other. "The camera can't hear."

The eviction story containing the interviews with distinguished clergymen and the affecting picture of Rooney kneeling on the sidewalk, his head bared and his voice apparently lifted in prayer, was a huge success and caused Penfield to rise several pegs in his employer's estimation. A few days later a new odor arose from some fetid corner of the earth and filled the public nostrils to such an extent that Barshfield gave orders to run no more eviction stories, and the Rosenthals, finding their source of income cut off, dropped out of sight, to be seen no more.

CHAPTER VI

THE fires that blaze beneath the caldrons of the cook-shops of Park Row are fed with human brains, and it is easy to comprehend the force of the simile—which is one of Barshfield's own, of course—when we have seen some of the burnt-out embers, for the mental powers do not last long when exposed to the fierce heat of those relentless furnace fires. You can find these burnt-out embers at almost any hour of the night clustered about the big grated door at the entrance of the city-room peering in with anxious eyes at the toilers under the hard electric lights, and envying their ability to earn a decent livelihood. Now and then they sell to some friendly city editor a "tip" on something that can be made to yield a special or exclusive story, and on these occasions it is not necessary to go far to spend the proceeds to excellent and speedy advantage.

The "Brasserie of Hard Times," as some Park Row Parisian has called a certain place of refreshment much frequented by lost souls and despondent ones, is fitted up with little stalls after the fashion of the oyster-houses of an elder day, and these serve as convenient places of reunion for those whose hair has whitened and whose eyes have grown dim before the furnace bars.

There are others who slake their thirst at this Brasserie, but its regular clientele is made up largely from the ranks of the unfortunates of Park Row, the burnt-out embers from the kitchen fires. Many of the habitués of the place appear regularly every afternoon at about three and remain until long past midnight, drinking as frequently as they are asked to, and chatting eagerly with their fellows about every imaginable phase of life, customs, and finance in Park Row. They know the pay-day of every office. They know the writer of every story that achieves a twenty-four hours' fame in the newspaper quarter of the town, and a change of city editors will set them buzzing and chattering together as excitedly as if vast interests of their own were at stake in the transfer of power. Their knowledge of the ever-shifting sands of influence or "pull," over which so many are trying to walk with unsteady feet, their thorough familiarity with the supposed likes and dislikes of the different editors and with the entire *chronique scandaleuse* of Park Row are little short of marvelous when we consider the fact that it is years since they have been regularly employed in a newspaper office. Nor are they liberal customers of the publican whose saloon affords them shelter and warmth, and at whose polished counter they enjoy the hospitality of their friends and chance acquaintances. Indeed, their own contributions to his till are so small and infrequent that it is not easy for the uninitiated to comprehend why they are permitted to occupy so many of the best tables for so many hours at a time. And yet that saloon-keeper has grown rich from the custom of these unfortunates, and there are among them

many whose proud boast it is that they never spend a cent in the place.

To me there is nothing in the whole town more pitiful than a group of these prematurely aged men huddled together about a table on which the glasses are sadly in need of refilling, their whitened heads almost touching as they talk over their prospects for the future—meaning the remainder of the week, for they seldom look further ahead than that—and live over again the golden, never-to-be-forgotten days when their brains were young and burned with a clear, steady flame before the furnace bars.

There are some, I believe, who can find food for mirth in such a spectacle as this; but I never see one of these unfortunates whom a few years of service in that awful furnace heat have served to transform from a "star" of the city-room into a dead ember, for whom life holds nothing but an alcove in the Brasserie of Hard Times, without a feeling of pity and admiration. They certainly look adversity in the face with rare courage and cheery mien, these gray ashes of an irrevocable past, and are far more ready to assume airs of easy-going affluence, which would be comical if they were not pathetic, than to bewail their ill fortune. And every one of them can look back to a period in his career when, in the idiom of Park Row, "it was a cold week that I didn't knock out my little ninety-odd dollars." That is the precise sum that is always employed by the frequenters of the Brasserie of Hard Times to indicate material prosperity.

News always filters quickly when it takes a downward course, and nowhere more rapidly than in Park Row, and so it happened that on the evening after

the disappearance of the evicted Rosenthals from the *Megaphone's* pages two of the "old-timers," as embers are considerately termed by their younger fellow-craftsmen, were sitting in their accustomed nook in the Brasserie of Hard Times waiting for some Samaritan to come in, when they were joined by a third who dropped into a vacant chair with the jovial greeting, "Well, boys, what's up?"

"Everything's moving along nicely in about the same old groove," replied one of the old-timers, in the cheerful tones habitual with those who do not know where their next meal is coming from. "Anything new with you, Charley?" he continued, for poor old Charley White, who had not had a regular job of any description in six years, nevertheless contrived to keep so closely in touch with the little world in which he was at one time a person of no small importance that the Brasserie always looked to him as one likely to prove the bearer of tidings of the very latest happenings.

"There's not much new anywhere that I know of except in the *Megaphone* office," said White, slowly, and with an air of mystery that had its immediate effect on his hearers. "But what I heard I'm not at liberty to speak of at present—certainly not until there are some further developments. You haven't heard anything about any probable changes over there, have you?"

"No," they had heard nothing; nor had Dan Farley, who was appealed to as he was passing by; and Dan was well equipped for news-gathering that afternoon, having just drawn his week's pay from the *Megaphone* treasury. He was not above learning, however, so he seated himself at the table with the

others, and, under the influence of a very welcome glass of whisky, Charley White declared to his round-eyed hearers that the "old man" was so well pleased with the way in which the eviction story had been handled that he had sent in to get the name of the reporter who did it, and the talk was that he would be put on the assistant night city desk at once and then shoved right along.

"And who is it that's doing the story?" inquired Dan, eagerly.

"Penfield was the name I heard," replied Charley, setting down his empty glass and looking at it so ruefully that Dan, who always had a warm corner in his heart for those old comrades in arms who had fallen wounded or exhausted by the wayside, bade him cheer up and ordered another round of drinks.

"He's not one of the right sort, that man Penfield," said one of the old-timers. "The boys have been onto him from the start. They say he's just waiting for a chance to play the sneak for what the old man will give him for it."

The Brasserie always hears of things before they happen.

At that very moment Penfield was seated at his desk in the city-room writing a letter to Kate Craven. He wrote her regularly once a week—long letters full of himself, his life in New York, his work on the paper, and the swift advance of his fortunes.

"Although I have been here just a year, I am beginning to feel at home in New York, though of course I am not nearly as big a toad in this huge metropolitan puddle as I was in Graytown, where everybody knew the local editor of the *Eagle*. But I'm making more than three times as much money—

my string was just eighty-seven dollars and fifty cents this week—and, what's more, I'm getting a firm grip on things. But I've found out one thing, and that is that a man who makes good in a New York office has got a hard fight on his hands. If he's got a good job he can be pretty sure that there'll be forty people trying to get him out of it; but I don't intend to let any of them do me up. I don't quite see my way yet to getting you on the paper—"

At this moment a voice at his elbow said: "Mr. Barshfield would like to see you in his office right away, Mr. Penfield," and he looked up to find Tops standing beside him and speaking in a tone of marked respect, as if he saw already on the reporter's brow some gleam of the great white light that beats upon a Park Row throne.

Penfield rubbed his eyes as if he had suddenly been awakened from a deep sleep. Indeed, he had often in his day-dreams pictured just such a summons from the throne-room and wondered what good fortune it would lead to. Mechanically he arose, thrust his half-finished letter into his pocket, and followed Tops to the private office of his chief.

"Sit down," said Barshfield, smiling pleasantly as he rose to shake hands with his visitor. "Mr. Vanderlip and I think"—Penfield now noticed that the managing editor was seated beside him—"that you are just the man we want to take charge of a new page we're starting. I want to put all the woman and home stuff in it, a column of art notes twice a week, and on the other days literary and musical paragraphs. That will leave us about two columns which I should like to have filled with short stories, humorous or pathetic, made up from the

news of the day. Some of these you can write yourself, and the rest you must get from the city staff. I'm going to put Mrs. Grimmond in charge of the woman's part, and we ought to have another woman to help her and also to do some of the local heart-interest stories. Very likely Mrs. Grimmond will have somebody in mind. You can talk it over with her."

Penfield left the royal presence with his mind in a whirl. But his cunning did not desert him, for he contrived to tell Mrs. Grimmond, who had been picking up a meager living by means of fashion stories signed "Lady Clara Vere de Vere," that it was he who had induced Barshfield to place her on the salary list. This was the first news she had received of her good fortune, and she wept with joy and swore eternal fealty to her preserver—poor, simple, generous soul that she was.

At a late hour that night Penfield resumed the letter that he had been writing to Kate.

"Just at the point of this break I was interrupted by a summons to Mr. Barshfield's office—a summons that is likely to prove of supreme importance to both of us, for he has put me in charge of a new page, and I have made a place on it for you at thirty-five dollars a week to begin on, with the chance of a raise if everything goes well. Come down just as soon as ever you can, for I need you more than ever."

In saying that he needed Kate Craven he voiced a feeling that was always uppermost in his heart. Not only was she his only real friend, but a needful one as well. He appreciated the healing balm of her counsel in times of doubt, for he realized that

during all the period of their intimacy she had never given him a word of bad advice. Moreover, he felt that he needed some friend in the office on whom he could rely in case of need. Too much engrossed in his work to have any time to spare for conviviality and idle amusement, he had made no friends in the city-room, and, as we have seen already, his associates in the office rather held aloof from him as a man not quite to be trusted.

When Kate Craven came to the end of Penfield's eight-page letter she found herself walking slowly down Main Street with her heart beating very fast and her mind busy with the question, "What will mother say?"

Not until after their supper had been eaten and the dishes washed and put away did Kate make known the import of Penfield's letter. To her great surprise, the elder woman listened without a word of comment or a sign of emotion, her face calm and her eyes cast down on her knitting, and it was fully a minute after her daughter had finished speaking before she answered:

"I made up my mind long ago that something of this sort was bound to happen; but I don't like it, and I don't see the necessity for it."

"But, mother, darling!" cried Kate; "you surely don't expect me to spend the rest of my days in a place like Graytown, do you?"

"And why not, I'd like to know?" rejoined Susan Craven, and the monotonous clicking of the needles ceased abruptly as she looked her daughter firmly in the eyes and went on: "Your father and I lived in this town and others very much like it all our lives, and, although we never had very many luxuries,

I can't see but what the Lord gave us about as much happiness, health, and contentment of spirit as He did to most folks. And I never once thought, and your father never thought, either, that there was any more happiness to be found in a big city than in a little village. What's got into all the young people these late years I don't know; but nothing will do for them except city life and city ways. It was a relief to my mind when that Ned Penfield went away, but now it seems you must up and follow him. What is he to you, anyway, Kate Craven? Has he ever asked you to marry him same as a young man ought to ask the girl he's courted?"

"No, not in so many words," Kate admitted.

"And you propose to pack up and chase after him down to New York without so much as a word out of his lips that binds him to do the right thing by you? How do you know he's got a place for you on that paper? Kate, if I didn't know that you were a good girl and high-principled, and with a head on your shoulders, I'd not let you go so long as I had the strength to prevent it. Well, I suppose I might as well give in first as last; but don't you put too much trust in that Penfield young man. I never saw a man yet with those dead-black eyes that was fit to be trusted out of sight. And, besides, I never more than half liked his feet."

Generally speaking, the woman who possesses an assortment of sterling qualities and the many ingrained prejudices which always cling to them is a confirmed "nagger." This Mrs. Craven was not, and now, having freed her mind of the subject, she said no more.

At last the day came when Kate said good-by to

her dry-eyed mother and, with her ticket and a little more than a hundred dollars saved from her *Eagle* earnings in her purse, took a seat in the day-coach that was to bear her to the great city.

Her mother went with her to the train to see her off on her journey, and her last words as she kissed her good-by were: "Be careful, my daughter, about the friends you make, for it is by them that you will be judged. Beware of bad men and loose women. They're never to be depended on. Try and make some good woman your friend—it's better that she should be good than clever—and with her to depend on you'll be reasonably safe."

And these words of caution Kate had good reason to recall later in her career.

CHAPTER VII

THE train started with a jolt that brought forcibly into Kate's mind the thought that she had cut loose for ever from the home in which she had been reared; from her mother, the only constant companion she had ever known; and from the little town whose narrowness and provincialism she had long outgrown in an imagination quickened and enriched by dreams of city life. As she caught a last glimpse of her mother's face and saw in it the look of sad, anxious brooding she realized that the step she had taken was irrevocable; and now, for the first time, serious doubt cast its shadow over her high spirits. Suppose, as her mother had more than once suggested, Ned Penfield should fail to prove the disinterested, loyal friend he had always professed to be? Resolutely she put the thought from her mind as one unworthy of her. She had pinned her full faith to him, and he alone had power to shake her confidence, for it is in that way that the blind trust.

The train increased its speed, the village of Graytown was soon left behind, and New York, with all its glorious possibilities of adventure and success, loomed up larger and nearer in the young girl's vision. The valley of the Mohawk was rich in its gorgeous autumnal foliage; the river sparkled in the clear, crisp sunlight; great fields of stacked corn inter-

spersed with bright yellow pumpkins flashed by; but to-day the peaceful charm of the lovely country had no appeal to an imagination that was steeped in dreams of far more exciting things. Even the memory of her mother's sad, anxious face was growing dim as she thought of this wonderful world that the Sunday *Megaphone* had created for her, and of which she had read in other and more pretentious schools of fiction.

All her life Kate Craven had known two separate and distinct worlds—the smaller one of Graytown and the larger one that lay behind the glass doors of the old mahogany bookcase to which she had turned with eagerness during the many hours of leisure that her simple home duties afforded. She could lose herself in the London of Dickens, in the Mayfair of Thackeray, in Mrs. Gaskell's peaceful village, or on the desert island of Robinson Crusoe. Along with her hard common-sense she had inherited from some mystic-loving New England forebear a quick imagination, and it was through this that she had been able to escape at times from the dreary routine of parochial life and so reach the age of twenty-two without becoming morbid or discontented.

The Sunday *Megaphone* had thrown open to her still another world far more alluring than any of those into which she had previously entered, and one, too, that was no less a creation of the human fancy. This was the realm of the sensational Sunday supplement, the great mirage that so many mistake for the real world of New York. As seen by those who draw their knowledge from the same treasure-house of mendacity that had enriched Kate's

mind, the metropolis is a city of wonderful contrasts, populated by the very rich, the very poor, the very wise and the very dull, the very good and the very bad. The lines that divide these various extremes are so sharply drawn that there can be no mistake in regard to the quality of the company that the stranger keeps.

This world was alluring to Kate because she could imagine herself as a part of it. She could never know Becky Sharp, or Tiny Tim, or man Friday; but she was now actually on the threshold of a real world that was quite as fascinating as any that she had read about and one whose doors would perhaps fly open at her touch.

Then her thoughts took on a shade of sadness, for she well knew that New York was a good place for the rich but not for the poor. She had heard this said so many times that she firmly believed it. Had not her neighbor, Lida Scarrett, who always spent at least two of the winter months in a New York boarding-house, told her repeatedly that she'd like to live there if she had a million dollars, but that it was no place for the poor? And did not the Sunday supplements constantly exploit the doings of the wealthy, their automobiles and diamonds and yachts and private cars; their country houses, opera boxes, and splendid parties? She had seen pictures of some of those houses, and Lida Scarrett had described to her the magnificence of more than one wedding that she had viewed from the sidewalk. What a marvelous power money was, to be sure! To what a world of joy and splendid revelry did it hold the key! Alas, not for her were those delirious joys. At best she could but stand with Lida Scar-

rett and gaze from afar off. But, after all, even that would be a dream and a delight, for the present at least. It saddened her, however, to know that New York was no place for the poor.

She must make money—she and Ned together—there was no doubt of that. But how? Wall Street should be the field of their operations. It was there that the "captains of industry" and the various "kings," "barons," and "Napoleons" of commerce transacted business in sums that ran well up into the millions. Its pavements must be of solid gold. How would it be possible, even for a young man as clever as Ned Penfield, to gain a foothold in such a wonderful place?

Vaguely she formed a mental picture of this millionaire society as it must exist on upper Fifth Avenue. There were the kings of finance and commerce—uncrowned, of course, but none the less haughty and imposing. There were their wives, each one with a lorgnette on her nose through which she gazed upon the world with an air of insolent defiance. There were the sons, all "club men," debonair, cynical, and with fateful power over women. There were the daughters, the "belles of Murray Hill," beautiful and brilliant and capable of almost any eccentricity. There was plate of solid gold, and furniture and hangings such as might have been found in the palace of the Queen of Sheba. Permeating all this wealth and luxury, this mad riot of yachts, automobiles, feasting, and drinking, was the keenest joy of living. It was impossible for this young girl, brought up under the rule of penurious domestic economy, to imagine those care-free people as anything but happy and contented. She had seen

pictures of some of the great houses on Fifth Avenue, and could not imagine financial anxiety or despondency or unhappiness of any sort—certainly not discontent—finding lodgment within their walls. The marital troubles, the divorces and elopements of which she had read from time to time were only a result of the general scheme of reckless enjoyment.

In sad contrast to this region of perpetual joy was the "East Side," where vice, poverty, and misery stalked hand in hand. She had seen in the *Megaphone* unforgettable pictures of gaunt, famine-stricken working-men with their starving, ragged wives and children, and she had learned from the same reliable source that the population in that part of the town was in the last stages of hunger and destitution. It was here that the "starving millions" eked out a miserable existence.

Swiftly the train sped on, yet to her impatient young spirit it seemed to crawl. She was thinking now of Miss Smithers and of the Sunday-night gatherings of wit, genius, and beauty that set the seal of distinction on her drawing-room. She could conjure up that scene of brilliant animation. Dark-eyed Italian singers, warbling the lays of their native land in voices that were the envy of the operatic world; famous actors reciting Hamlet's soliloquy; violinists of international renown distilling exquisite music from the strings of costly Stradivarians; beautiful women discussing the madness of Ophelia with the most famous actresses in the land and dazzling them with the revelations of their own mental accomplishments; artists wearing velvet suits and bearing portfolios containing specimens of their wares; editors of influential dailies conversing with

members of the Woman's Betterment Society and absorbing from them ennobling ideas to be employed later in the great work of molding public opinion. And, moving to and fro amidst this notable company, she saw Miss Smithers herself, her face, reconstructed in imagination from countless newspaper pictures, alive with gracious feelings and intellectual emotions.

But the phase of metropolitan life that enchained her attention more than any other was that of which she had the least knowledge, although her fancy had often run riot in painting it. The "Gay White Way," the region of a thousand and one delights, had taken a strong hold on her imagination. Its very wickedness made it fascinating to her. Without any desire to take part in its mad revels, she nevertheless longed to see for herself precisely what they were like. There were even moments when she regretted that she had been born a woman, so greatly did she envy the men who could plunge into that garden of enchantment and drink their fill at its fountains of joy.

In her mind she saw the great street ablaze with electric lights; she heard the strains of countless bands, the clink of wine-glasses, the shouts of mad laughter. Life, love, music, feasting, and dancing combined to make this part of the town the brightest, gayest, wickedest corner of the entire continent. There was another and a darker side to the picture—the maidens annually sacrificed to keep up these splendid saturnalia. The hope of saving some of these would justify her own excursions into this land of mystery and joy. That was the only gateway through which a girl like herself might enter

this territory and still remain undefiled. In her heart she felt that she would be thankful for the opportunity.

Nevertheless she shuddered as she permitted her mind to dwell on the dangers that beset the footsteps of innocent young women who trod the streets of the miraculous city. Revelations of the "white slave" atrocities had stirred her to indignation, and she firmly believed that young girls were frequently seized on the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue or even torn from their parents' arms and carried off into infamous bondage.

Curiously enough, her mind contained no pictures of the New York of average means. She saw only the two extremes of poverty and wealth. Of the fairly well-to-do, of the hard-working, self-respecting poor, of the newly arrived immigrants, of the long-settled Germans, Hungarians, Bohemians, Irish, and other foreigners, of the wisely prosperous Jews, of the small shop-keeping class and the struggling professional men and women who form fully three-quarters of the city's population she knew absolutely nothing. Of the working-members of her own sex she had heard only of those who in some way or other had contrived to project themselves into print. A few of these were actresses or writers. But those of real importance in her eyes were the ones who headed "movements," or whose names appeared on the committees that were busy in reforming the city and promoting the welfare of their less fortunate sisters. She had no conception of the immense number of women of the younger generation who were toiling cheerfully in the many fields of industry that the city offers, supporting them-

selves, and in many cases others of their blood, with a heroism that is all the more admirable because of their physical disability. Nor had she any conception of the happiness and well-being that these modestly courageous ones found in their toil.

Still dreaming, she watched the sun go down and saw the lights shining from the houses and the stars peeping from the clear sky. It was dark when the first of the glowing street-lamps and the scattered blocks of houses told her that she had reached the outer gates of the city of her dreams. Soon she would be treading its busy streets and taking part in its myriad industries and pleasures.

It was a beautiful mirage that presented itself to her mental gaze, and it was fated that she should live a long time in the town that already seemed so real to her without even suspecting that it was not the real New York. As to the manner of her awakening—but we are getting ahead of our story.

A slight stirring among the passengers in the car told her that they were near their journey's end, and she thrust her head far out of the window in the hope of catching a glimpse of the city of her dreams. Far off she beheld a great glare in the sky, the reflection of countless electric lights, the splendid halo that hung over the wonderful town of immeasurable wealth and starving millions, of brilliant men and women and vast "movements," of a life of marvelous contrasts and opportunities, of which, before the setting of another sun, she was to be a part.

Penfield was waiting as the train drew into the station, and although he did not offer to kiss her—she had been wondering on the way whether he would or no—it was quite plain that he was more

than glad to see her. After all, there was such a big crowd there, and it was better to begin her career without giving any one cause to "make remarks"—that bugaboo of village life.

Ten minutes later they were seated at a small table in an inconspicuous restaurant, and he was ordering what seemed to her a most elaborate meal. And as he talked to the waiter with the easy assurance of an accomplished *gourmand*, she was struck with the great change in his manner, appearance, language, and even facial expression. His clothes were new and of distinctly urban cut, and he wore a ruby scarf-pin that she had never seen before. His face and figure were somewhat fuller now, and there was a certain note of self-complacency and condescension in his manner of speaking to her that she did not altogether like.

"There's one thing I want to explain to you," he said, as soon as the waiter had departed, "and that is that you and I are supposed to be total strangers in Park Row. Of course, we'll meet now and then on the quiet; but in the office you mustn't let on that you ever heard of me before."

"Why, Neddy!" she exclaimed, dolefully. "I thought it was to be just the same here between you and me that it was at home. Aren't you glad to see me? And do you suppose I would even have dared to come to New York unless you were here to stand by me till I found a footing?"

"My dear Kitty," he said, soothingly, "of course I'm glad to see you and glad you've come—more glad than you've any idea of—but I don't want to have anybody suspect that we're friends or that it was through me that you got your job. Nobody must

know that, or it will make a great difference with both of us. But we'll pull together, all the same, and you can be worth all the more to me because nobody knows."

"But surely," said Kate, "somebody must know about it. You must have asked somebody to take me—Mr. Barshfield or Mr. Macy or somebody?"

"Not at all," rejoined the young journalist, with a chuckle that indicated his appreciation of his own diplomacy. "When you've once been drawn into office politics you learn how to play the game without laying your cards on the table. It was Lady Clara, who edits our woman's page, that got you the place—of course, at my private request—and she's asked you to stay with her till you get settled. Your trunk's on its way there now."

"Do you mean that woman who writes all those foolish things about lovers and how to feed canaries over the name of Lady Clara Vere de Vere? I must say I don't hanker after her acquaintance."

"Oh, she's all right!" replied Penfield, reassuringly, "the best-hearted old thing in the business. I put it up to her to name you for the job, and she couldn't very well refuse, as she thinks that she owes her place to me. Now, it's up to her to coach you so you'll be a credit to her. I can tell you one thing, young lady, and that is you're lucky enough to have Lady Clara anxious to keep you instead of sitting up nights framing some excuse for getting you off the paper and putting a friend of her own on your desk."

"I suppose it's all right, Neddy, but I don't like the deceit and mystery of it," said Kate, ruefully.

"Mustn't I speak to you when we meet in the office or on the street?"

"Why, we're sure to meet in the course of business inside of a day or two, and we can let our acquaintance date from that. Oh, you'll make plenty of friends among the women in the office—I wouldn't have too much to do with the men if I were you—and you'll be so busy you won't have time to get lonely; so eat your dinner and be thankful you've got me to push you along. And the more you know about office politics the more thankful you'll be to me for fixing things this way."

"I wish you'd tell me just what you mean by office politics," said Kate, as the waiter changed their plates. She had been thinking, with feelings of distrust and uneasiness, about all that he had told her, and her naturally frank and honest soul recoiled from even the slight form of deception that was required of her. She realized, too, that in all her dreams of New York her sweetheart—if such he could be called—had had a part, and now, before she had even begun her duties, she was told that she must be practically alone.

"Office politics," replied Penfield, after a moment of solemn deliberation, "is trying to hold your own job and get a better one while at the same time you see to it that no one else gets too strong in the office. Now we'll go down to Lady Clara's."

For a moment Kate Craven wondered whether it could be possible that in bringing her to the city Ned Penfield could have had his own interests at heart rather than hers. Then she dismissed the idea as one unworthy of her and an injustice to the kind friend to whom she owed so much, and

whose life was perhaps to be for ever bound up with her own.

Penfield summoned a cab with a lordly air, and as they turned into a quiet side-street he put his arm about her waist and drew her so close to him that he could feel the pressure of her full, rounded breast against his side. She lifted up her face to him, and he kissed her on the forehead and then on the lips with a passion that was new to her, and which brought a sudden flush to her cheeks as she drew away from him, murmuring:

"Don't, Neddy, please; you mustn't! Remember, we're not engaged!"

"Kate, dear," he said, still holding her close to him in the darkness of the cab, "you're the prettiest thing I've seen since I left Graytown, and I've missed you more than you can ever know. I love you, dear—ever so much."

And these words, which were the most lover-like that had ever fallen from his cautious lips, brought infinite joy and comfort into the heart of the young girl and drove away the doubt and distrust that had oppressed her a moment before. And she sat with smiling lips and bright, moist eyes, silent and passive in his embrace, until they drew up in front of a tall apartment house, one of many in a side-street just off of Broadway.

CHAPTER VIII

MRS. GRIMMOND, better known as Lady Clara, welcomed Kate with a kindly cordiality that the young girl knew at once was sincere, although the appearance of the fashion-writer surprised her. Tall and conspicuously dressed, and with a color on her faded motherly face that even the young country girl knew to be artificial, Lady Clara was entirely unlike anything ever seen on the streets of Graytown.

Her rooms were on the eighth floor, and very nice and comfortable they were, too. A canary, awakened by the glare of the electric light, piped shrilly from its gilt cage until its mistress threw a shawl over him. The walls were hung with pictures, among which were many framed originals of newspaper cartoons. There were signed photographs everywhere, and in the sunniest corner of the room stood Mrs. Grimmond's desk, littered with her work. The inevitable tea-service stood on a low table in another corner, and through the Bagdad portières the visitor caught a glimpse of a minute private hall —the pride of Lady Clara's heart because of the tone that its possession implied—and the little dining-room beyond.

"And so you're from the same town as Mr. Penfield?" said Lady Clara. "Of course, he explained to you that we have to keep mum about your being

a friend of his? My dear, you've positively no idea of the meaning of the term office politics till you get into the *Megaphone* office. It's rampant there, I can tell you, and you never know who your friends or your enemies are till you wake up some fine morning with your head cut off. If it hadn't been for Mr. Penfield I would have been dropped long ago, and that's why I'm so glad to do anything I can for you, dear. I suppose you know Mr. Penfield pulls a mighty strong oar with Mr. Barshfield these days —a very strong oar indeed for any one as young as he is. It looks to me as if he'd be sitting way up on one of the top steps of the throne before long. I'm sure I hope so, for it will make me a great deal surer of my job than I ever was before, and that's a mighty important thing when you've got others to do for as well as yourself."

"You haven't a family, have you, Mrs. Grimmond?" asked Kate, in some surprise, for she had imagined her entirely alone in the world.

"Well," replied the older woman, "you can take it from me that there isn't a woman in the town who's earning her living that isn't paying for somebody else's, too. Now, here's a letter from a man I haven't seen for years and who was no friend of mine when I did know him. Did his best to get me discharged. He must have used up every friend he ever had to come to me. Poor thing! It's pretty tough to have to ask a favor of anybody you've tried to injure, and he says we ought to let bygones be bygones, so I suppose I'll have to do something for him, though he'll have to wait till pay-day. Now, if you don't mind, I'll just go in and slip on something easier. I've been going about all day in

this heavy thing until I'm just tired to death with the weight of it. You can go on talking just the same; I can hear you through the curtains."

She withdrew into her bedroom and went on with what she was saying:

"Yes, I'm doing real well this winter; but, of course, it's only hen-cooping, after all. Ever since Mr. Marshall's been back on the Sunday desk he's given me all the space I want and let me suggest my own stories and sign any one I liked. I do think he's just the finest man that ever came into Park Row, and he's got the loveliest wife and the sweetest child and the dearest home you can find anywhere in this whole city. You've heard of his wife, haven't you—Leona Dare, that used to do the fashions and society notes? Oh, she was a hen-cooper once just the same as me, and there's quite a little romance about the way she came to marry him."

Lady Clara paused at this point in her narration in a way that somehow led Kate to suspect that she was dragging some garment over her head, and while she is thus employed I will explain that in the parlance of Park Row a "hen-coop" is the room devoted to the feminine members of the staff, who are known as "hen-coopers," and who speak of their profession as "hen-cooping."

"You see, Mr. Marshall sent Leona Dare out on a heart-interest story one day when she had been about a year on the paper and hadn't done anything but society and fashions. The poor thing had never had any experience at all except what she got in that one year, and she was as nervous as could be when she got this assignment. Well, they oughtn't to have sent a young thing like her to do any such

work; but Mr. Marshall thought she could get away with it all right, and, to tell the truth, he was just beginning to get a little interested in her and was anxious to push her along. If he had sent some old person like me it would have been all right, but to send a young girl not more than twelve months out of Vassar, where she got all sorts of notions in her head about the beautiful in literary art, and the great amount of good that a woman ought to do with her pen, and Heaven knows what else besides—to send her out on such an assignment as that wasn't right."

Again Mrs. Grimmond's narrative was smothered in rustling silk, and Kate took advantage of the pause to ask her what the assignment was.

"Well, there was a young Italian girl in Mulberry Street that got jealous of a married woman that lived in the same block with her own sweetheart, and one day she took a knife and went in and killed the woman and her two-year-old child. It was a big story, and Mr. Marshall thought Leona could cover it, and he told her to go up there and do it. He meant it in all kindness, but when she got there and saw the woman and the child lying out on the bed, with candles round them and the spots on the floor where the blood had spattered, she just keeled over in a dead faint, and they had to ring for an ambulance before they could bring her to. Then she was weak as a cat, and instead of turning in a big heart-interest story of a column and a half, all she could write was a little miserable half column that they boiled down to two paragraphs. Mr. Marshall was so mad with her for falling down on the story that he wrote her a sharp note, and she got sore and left. Then she

couldn't get anything to do, and her landlady gave her notice to leave, and if it hadn't been for my meeting her on the street and asking her to come and stop with me a little while I don't know what would have happened."

At this point in her narrative Lady Clara emerged from the bedroom clothed in a garment unlike anything that Kate had ever seen before, and fashioned of embroidered silk of dazzling scarlet.

"Lovely, isn't it?" she remarked, complacently, as she surveyed herself in the tall mirror. "That was sent me by the advertising manager of the Greenberg & Billheimer Co. the day of their spring opening. He's an awfully nice man, and just as thoughtful and generous as any man could possibly be. He's a bachelor, too, though I always tell him he's cheating some woman out of the very best husband any of us could ever hope to get. Well, where was I in my story?"

"You'd just got to where you met her on the street and asked her to come and stop with you," answered Kate, who was very much interested.

"Oh yes! Well, I fixed up a cot for her in the parlor, and there she stayed for six weeks. And any one nicer to live with than that girl you can't imagine. She cooked beautifully, and she simply insisted upon doing all the housework—making the beds, getting the meals, and everything. When I got back at night, no matter how late it was, I always found her waiting for me with the daintiest little supper all nice and hot and ready on the table, the very minute I was out of my dress and into my kimono. Mr. Marshall was always asking me about her, but I never let on I knew where she was; only said that

I thought she must be having a pretty hard time of it, poor thing! I suppose you know it's a good thing to keep a man on the anxious seat when you have the chance. Then one day he asked me how it was I came to be looking so happy and well fed, and a bright idea came into my head, and I said to him: 'Mr. Marshall, I've got a cook that's done it all, and if you'll come to dinner next Friday night'—that was his day off and mine too—'I'll give you a taste of her cooking.' Leona said at first she'd rather cut her hand off than cook so much as an egg for him—I knew by that she still had a fondness for him—but I told her she had just got to do as I told her, and so, to make a long story short, Mr. Marshall came up, and we gave him the loveliest dinner he ever had in his life. A beautiful thick steak all smothered in fresh mushrooms—at least his piece was; I told him they made me ill, and so they do when they're a dollar a pound—and before that a whole can of French tomato soup that I told him the new cook made by stewing fresh tomatoes four hours over a slow fire; and a most delicious salad that Leona invented herself—I'll get her to make you one some day—and—oh, I forgot, we had oysters to begin with—and for dessert a rum omelette with eggs that weren't more than an hour old."

"Did your friend wait on table and change the plates?" asked Kitty.

"No, indeed, she stood just outside the door—I had him sitting with his back to it—and we passed the things from one to another. Two or three times I caught her peeking in and shaking her fist at him. And when we were all through and he was smoking his cigar and drinking a cup of coffee with a little

brandy in it, I asked him if he wouldn't like to see my little kitchen and took him out where Leona, with her sleeves rolled up, was washing the dishes."

"What happened then?" demanded Kitty, eagerly.

"I don't know. I went out and left them there with the door closed, and the next day Leona was back on the paper, and in three months they were married. Now, don't mind me, but go to bed just as soon as you feel like it."

At ten o'clock next morning Kate awoke to find Mrs. Grimmond, still clad in her gorgeous kimono, standing at her bedside with a tray in her hand.

"Sit up, dear, and have some tea and toast and a boiled egg," said that amiable woman. "I thought I'd let you sleep as long as possible. By and by, when the work begins to tell on you, it won't be so easy to sleep sound the whole night through as you do in the country. And as soon as you're ready we'll go down-town together."

"But aren't we very late?" asked the young girl, who had never heard of any one going to work after eight or, at the latest, nine in the morning.

"It doesn't matter very much at this time of the week," replied the other. "I've got my page all made up, and, besides, I'm doing a lot of my work at home. That's the best way in Park Row. Keep out of the office as much as you can, and they'll forget you're there. If you're around under foot all the time somebody's likely to get sore on you and try to cop out your job."

It was almost twelve when Mrs. Grimmond led the way into the *Megaphone* building and up, by way of the elevator, to the small room on the ninth floor which was called the hen-coop. Miss Minturn,

a thin, dark, sharp-featured young woman with eyes like gimlets and a face deeply marked by the unmistakable lines of sour discontent, welcomed the new-comer by extending a frigid hand and declaring, in tones that seemed to give the lie to her words, that she was "very pleased to meet her." After this greeting she resumed her writing with much apparent industry and absorption, but several times during the day Kate became conscious of her sharp scrutiny, and was oppressed with the uncomfortable thought that she had already encountered an antagonistic spirit in the *Megaphone* office.

"Here's a story that I think you can do very nicely," said Lady Clara, as soon as Kate had established herself at the one vacant desk with fresh ink and pens and a big pad of white paper before her. "It's the business office's idea, so you want to do your level best. The caption is 'Ear-rings in All Climes and Ages,' and you'd better do about a column and a half. The cuts will bring it up to three columns. Begin with somebody away back, like Cleopatra, that wore ear-rings and carry it right down to the present day. The department stores are handling a lot of them now, and will give us the cuts, so all you'll have to do will be to describe them. Of course, you can cover Cleopatra and those ancient dames in a few stickfuls and give all the rest of your space to the new styles they're advertising. And be sure to tell how they're worn at Newport and Tuxedo. I'll have a couple of pictures of society women wearing them. And I'll send out and get all the clippings they've got about ear-rings."

Aided by the office envelope of clippings, the encyclopedia, and a half-dozen proofs of cuts sup-

plied from the business office, Kate set to work with so much energy that she was well into the modern fashions when Lady Clara, who had been bustling in and out of the office and holding whispered conferences with various members of the staff from the moment of her arrival, announced that it was time for lunch.

"You must lunch with me to-day," said Kate, remembering what the other had said the night before about the state of her funds, and together they went down Park Row and through a narrow street—the country girl would have called it merely an alleyway—to a restaurant occupying three or four floors and running clear through to the next street. On the second floor, in which a great many late ones still lingered, gossiping for the most part over cigarettes, coffee, and little glasses of brandy, they found Mr. Marshall and his wife finishing their repast, and at their cordial bidding they seated themselves beside them.

"And so you're new to this business?" said Mrs. Marshall, with friendly interest, as Lady Clara took up the bill of fare. Kate noticed that she was pretty, very well dressed, and had a kindly manner that attracted her at once. "I had four years at it," she went on, "and it would have ended in a case of nervous prostration if it hadn't been for this man here who found something else for me to do."

"Something you're much better fitted for than newspaper work," remarked her husband, dryly, but as if he meant much more than he said.

"Lady Clara, you certainly must bring Miss Craven up to the flat to see little Tommy!" continued the young wife. "He's getting bigger and

lovelier and cunninger every day, and you haven't been to see him for months. I know he feels terribly about it."

"The sweetest baby that ever lived!" cried Mrs. Grimmond. "Here, waiter, bring us some of those clams—you like clams, don't you dear?—and then after that we'll have a medium steak with bernaise sauce—don't let them cook it to a cinder!—and some potatoes hashed in cream and a small bottle of red wine. That won't break you, will it, dear? You see," she added, turning to Mrs. Marshall, "I'm in my usual day-before-pay-day condition, and if Miss Craven hadn't nobly invited me to lunch with her I should have starved."

"If you let every beat and bum on Park Row hold you up you certainly will starve one of these days," said Marshall, severely.

"Oh, well, but how can I help handing out a dollar now and then to a poor fellow that's in hard luck? I say to myself, if he can put away his pride and come to me for money he certainly must need it," replied Lady Clara, with the easy-going logic of her kind.

"Put away his pride!" snorted Marshall, indignantly. "The man that will sponge on a woman like you has got no pride to put away. There are plenty of poor people in this town who really need and deserve a little help, but they'd starve if they waited for you women to do anything for them. If you feel charitable I'll tell you of some places where a few dollars will do a lot of good. But you don't! You sloppy, sentimental women think that you've actually got charitable motives, but you've not. You've got a few sympathetic nerves somewhere

near the surface of the skin that can be easily reached and have a quick connection with your tear-ducts. Those nerves respond only to the touch of cheek and mendacity, so you'll pass by a lot of deserving cases and keep yourself broke for the sake of perpetuating the race of Park Row beats. That's what you call 'doing a little good in the world.'"

Kate Craven's attention was arrested not only by the Sunday editor's words, but by the force with which he uttered them, and at the same time she recalled the begging letter received by Lady Clara the night before. That women should borrow of one another, even of those whom they had injured, seemed natural enough, but that men of the class described by Mr. Marshall as Park Row beats and bums should be willing to accept charity from this kindly, simple-minded, hard-working woman seemed appalling.

"Don't be so harsh, Fred!" said Mrs. Marshall, laying an affectionate hand on the elder woman's shoulder. "Remember there was one person Lady Clara helped who really needed help and who hasn't forgotten it, either."

And as Lady Clara raised her eyes gratefully from her plate, Kate saw that they were brimming with tears, but whether because of Mr. Marshall's sharp words or the gentle ones of his wife she could not guess.

CHAPTER IX

THOSE were wonderful days that followed Kate's advent in New York—days whose every flying hour enriched her mind with some fresh knowledge or illumined it with some new point of view. Graytown, in which she had passed her whole life, was fast becoming a mere memory. New York was her world now, a world of infinite variety and ceaseless activities, in which she was determined to make a place for herself. Bit by bit the great city was casting its spell over her. She was beginning to love the wind-swept cañons that lay between its huge down-town sky-scrapers, the blaze that made Broadway a wondrous nightly panorama, and even the picturesque bits called "foreign quarters" that she glimpsed from car windows on her way up and down town. At first the sullen, unceasing roar of street traffic had stunned her, but now it was music in her ears.

But, more than all the rest, it was the women who appealed to her, no matter whether rolling down Fifth Avenue in luxurious vehicles, streaming out of the big department stores at closing-time, or staggering through the meaner streets under great bundles of shoddy clothing. To her they were all members of a universal sisterhood, bound together by ties of common interest, and stimulating her mind to schemes for their betterment that should lighten the

toil of some and deprive others of a moiety of the spoils of exorbitant and unneeded wealth.

She realized now the value of the education that she owed to the contents of the old mahogany bookcase. She had been a judicious and attentive rather than a wide reader, and her retentive mind was a storehouse of the best literature from which she could draw at will. Lady Clara, who had never read a serious book in her life, was amazed at the facility with which this unsophisticated young country girl could, at a moment's notice and by mere recourse to her memory, furnish apt quotations from the Bible, Shakespeare, Emerson, and even the Latin and Greek philosophers.

The work required of Kate was not difficult. Like most women who have served a long apprenticeship on Park Row, Lady Clara was content to tread the paths worn bare by the feet of her predecessors, and it was this careful shaping of her course that had won for her the confidence and approval of royalty. For Barshfield, although generally regarded as a woman-hater because he was unmarried and, so far as any one knew, unattached, had a keen sense of the commercial value of an adroit feminine appeal. The Woman's Page was one of his pet institutions, and he regarded its sloppy productions with supreme satisfaction, although he seldom read beyond the head-lines. With serene masculine complacency he considered that feminine interests ranged from fashions and society down to recipes for cookery and cosmetics, and schemes for the extermination of insects and the removal of grease-spots from woolen fabrics. Almost anything that lay between these not too remote poles of learn-

ing might be printed to the enlightenment and entertainment of the feminine sex; but above them were regions of intellectuality into which women could not hope to journey. Below them was nothing worth printing.

Another belief that Barshfield and Lady Clara held in common was that indiscriminate praise of all women who happened to fill the public eye for the moment was highly pleasing to the whole sex. It was, therefore, the policy of the Woman's Page to speak in flattering terms of every one. The women who received municipal appointments or tried to obtain them straightway became the subjects of glowing eulogies, and even higher praise was heaped upon those who headed "movements" of any sort. Poisoners and ladies who figured in the divorce courts and in unsavory scandals gained a halo through Lady Clara's sympathetic treatment.

"You must always remember," she said to her assistant, "that you can view almost any case from the standpoint of heart-interest."

In her first long letter to her mother, written just ten days after her arrival in the city, Kate spoke in detail of her work. She had told the members of her sex how to raise squab, and had estimated the gains of that calling from imaginative figures furnished by Lady Clara; she had visited a woman about to be tried for infanticide and written a "heart-interest" account of the case, intimating that if her husband had supplied her with more spending-money she would not have been led into crime; she had prepared illuminating articles on the wearing of earrings, the making-over of dresses, the canning of tomatoes, and the care of infants during the period

of teething. In the "Heart and Soul" column, supposedly conducted by one Frissie Flirt, but actually under her own supervision—Frissie being what Lady Clara called "only an office signature"—she had given sage counsel to scores of the disappointed, the anxious, and the lovesick.

So far as it went the letter was a miracle of frankness and honesty. From its half-dozen closely written pages Susan Craven was able to gain a clear comprehension of her daughter's life under its new conditions, her intimate association with Lady Clara, and the nature of her duties on the Woman's Page. And while recognizing and grateful for its frankness, its perusal left her with an uneasy feeling that the work was vulgar and altogether unworthy of her daughter's talents and upbringing. Was this the best that the metropolis had to offer in the way of literary employment? Surely on a paper of the importance of the *Megaphone* there should be need of efforts more worthy than these! But perhaps that would come in good time, and at least it was a comfort to learn, as she did from a single sentence at the bottom of the last page, that Kate had thus far seen but little of Ned Penfield.

This was more than true, for if Penfield had been employed on a Martian journal Kate would scarcely have seen less of him than she did under their present agreement. He passed her now and then in the corridor, but never with even a nod of recognition; and her heart hungered for the old companionship. He was the only man she had ever known intimately or cared for, and she found herself in the paradoxical situation of wishing that some one would introduce him to her. The estrangement was the only thing

that marred the happiness she found in her work, her association with Lady Clara, and the hourly opportunities for learning. But despite these manifold opportunities the city that she saw was still the mirage of her dreams.

Of all this she said nothing in her letter to her mother. Nor did she mention the fact that from the moment of her arrival in the *Megaphone* office she had felt herself an object of more than ordinary interest to the other members of the staff. The women seemed politely indifferent to her presence, and more than one of them, she thought, glanced superciliously at her clothes, thus constantly reminding her that they were not of urban cut, though they had done very well in Graytown. The men looked at her clothes, too, but in a different way. In fact, although personal vanity was not one of her besetting sins, she could not long remain unconscious of the fact that the masculine element of the staff regarded her with distinct approval. Moreover, as the looks with which the men favored her generally included her whole figure, she was led to believe that her close-fitting dress of brown—a triumph of the Graytown dressmaker—was not displeasing to them.

"I wish you'd tell me what there is peculiar about my clothes," she said to Lady Clara one afternoon; "the women seem to sniff at them, but the men don't."

"Don't worry about your dress," said the other. "It's neat and pretty and fits you well—too well, perhaps," she added, with a smile.

"Too well!" repeated Kate. "What do you mean?"

"My dear, it's not your dress that attracts atten-

tion, but what's inside it. You've got the sort of figure that makes a man turn and stare and causes cattish women, of whom we have a few in this office, to disapprove. The first time I saw you I said to myself, 'There's a girl who's born to make a lot of trouble'; and, you see, you're beginning already. Did none of those men up the state ever tell you that you had a pretty shape?"

"Ned Penfield used to say that, but I never thought it was such an important matter. Here in New York, though, it seems to count more than brains."

"It certainly does," rejoined Lady Clara; "especially when it comes to making trouble. By and by you must get yourself a nice low-cut evening dress, and then you'll see the men just eating you with their eyes."

"No, I thank you," replied Kate, blushing prettily as she spoke; "when I exhibit myself in that fashion it will be for the benefit of one man alone!" And she resumed her work, unconscious of the amused smile with which Lady Clara continued to regard her.

The color deepened in her cheeks as the full meaning of Lady Clara's words reached her inner consciousness. She realized that the men who had stared at her had been appraising her good points as farmers note those of cattle at a county fair, but with far less innocent intent, and she resented their attitude of mind with keen loathing, all the more so because she was powerless to prevent it. For a moment she even went so far as to wish that the Lord had made her flat-chested and spindle-shanked instead of the full-bosomed, well-rounded girl that she was.

There was one man in the *Megaphone* shop whom Kate had liked from the first, chiefly because of the extreme courtesy and deference with which he treated all the women in the office, herself, it seemed to her, more than the rest. As she came to know him better she found him well read, thoughtful, and with a point of view that was gentle and by no means in sympathy with that of Park Row.

Ernest Telford was a New-Yorker by birth, which made him a rare bird in his environment. His position was that of "rewrite-man"; that is to say, he rewrote in good English and with genuine literary skill the crude, hastily prepared stories turned in by reporters with more legs than brains or sent in over the telephone in the common vernacular of the day. His ability in this line of work was generally acknowledged, and it was believed that had he so desired he might long since have risen to a high place in the councils of the kitchen. But Telford seemed content with his duties as a rewriter of other men's work; coming to his desk late in the afternoon and remaining till after midnight. A tall, slender man of forty-one, with rather sad, brown eyes, a refined face, and long, slender white hands which by some daily miracle escaped the ink-stains which are the badge of Park Row servitude, his was an appealing figure in the eyes of Kate Craven.

Impelled by curiosity, she looked up what he had rewritten, and was surprised at the purity of his English and the charm and grace of his style. That a man of his literary attainments should be put to the degrading drudgery of rewriting and polishing the raw work of his intellectual inferiors seemed to Kate like placing a high-mettled and blooded racer

between the shafts of a huckster's cart. She said as much to Lady Clara, and the latter replied:

"Telford knows that he can hold that job as long as he likes, because if there's any upheaval in the office the storm will pass right over his head and he'll be safe there in his own little corner. Besides, he has a pretty good salary and time to do a little outside work of the sort that he likes. I only wish you and I were as sure of our jobs as he is, or as well paid."

That night when Kate came home she found the air heavy with cigarette-smoke and sachet-powder. A slender, blue-eyed, and flaxen-haired woman was seated in the little front parlor in close converse with Lady Clara, who was holding the visitor's hand in both of hers and listening with almost tearful sympathy to her words. Kate noticed that the stranger's attire was costly and that her jewelry was worn for effect. Her feet—small, slender, and shod in dazzling patent leather—rested on the round of a chair, and her stockings were drawn up so tightly as to reveal the white flesh between the meshes of the thin black silk. A broad hat of the kind frequently pictured on the fashion page crowned her blond head, and another of precisely the same make peeped coyly over the edge of an open bandbox on the center-table.

"Kate, dear," exclaimed Lady Clara, "this is Mrs. Rowenna, whose picture we ran this morning! Roberta, I've always wanted you to know Miss Craven. I'm sure you two are just going to love each other. She helps me get out the page."

"You dear, sweet thing!" cried Mrs. Rowenna, impulsively, as she leaped to her feet and seized

Kate with both hands. "Of course I'll love you! Who could help it? As if I didn't love everybody on the *Megaphone* after that beautiful article it printed about me to-day. I read it in bed this morning, and I just cried and cried."

Kate noticed that the face turned toward her was decidedly pretty and becomingly colored. Meanwhile Lady Clara had taken the hat from the bandbox.

"Just see what this darling brought me!" she said, displaying the huge "creation," as the fashion page would have called it—a marvelous combination of feathers, fur, and velvet.

"She deserves more than that," replied Mrs. Rowenna, still holding Kate's hands and gazing into her eyes with a sad smile. "Here I've been for the last hour telling her my troubles while she listened like an angel."

"And so absorbed that she forgot to offer you any refreshment!" broke in Lady Clara, suddenly dropping the hat and hastening into the dining-room.

"You must come and see me some afternoon," said Mrs. Rowenna, impulsively. "I'm sure that I could talk as freely to you as to that darling Mrs. Grimmond."

"But I'm always down-town in the afternoon," said Kate, tactfully disengaging her hand as if for the purpose of taking off her hat. "Some evening, perhaps."

"I've got some lovely rye whisky that Colonel Culpepper sent me, or shall I make you a cup of tea?" called Lady Clara from the dining-room.

"Oh, don't trouble to make tea," answered Mrs.

Rowenna, quickly; and a moment later the hostess appeared with whisky, a siphon, and three glasses. The visitor re-established her feet on the round of the chair, a lighted cigarette in one hand and a glass in the other, and resumed her earnest discourse with Lady Clara while Kate withdrew to her own room. For the first time in her life she had met an actress face to face, and the novel experience quite thrilled her. She had always understood that players were different from other folks, and so emotional in temperament that their occasional lapses from virtue were not to be judged by the severe standard under which she herself had been reared by her New England mother. Nevertheless the cigarette, the display of stockings, the whisky, and above all the strange tenseness with which this one had gazed into her eyes while holding both her hands had proved something of a shock to her conventional ideas. She knew that Mrs. Rowenna must be what she called a "good woman," otherwise Lady Clara would not have admitted her to their home, and for a brief moment she wondered what the bad ones were like.

The visitor was saying good-by when Kate returned to the parlor. She had her arms clasped around the elder woman, and was saying:

"The world may misjudge me, but you know, dearest, that our marriage was just the same in the sight of God as if a priest had mumbled his blessing over it."

Afterward Kate asked Lady Clara what Mrs. Rowenna had meant when she spoke of a marriage in the sight of God, adding ingenuously, "I thought that was true of all marriages?"

"My dear, I thought you knew poor Roberta's story," replied the other. "Oh, I forgot; it all happened nearly two years ago while you were living in the country. Well, you're probably the only girl in New York who hasn't heard of it, for it made an awful lot of talk at the time. We ran it as a daily feature for a whole week, and I covered the heart-interest end of it. Poor thing! If ever a woman suffered unjustly in this world she did. I declare when I saw her on the witness-stand in a blue tailor-made suit and a hat with a long, drooping plume, her whole form shaking with sobs as she gave her testimony, my woman's heart went out to her. And right away I thought of a line to use in my story—Mr. Marshall read it in the proof and was so pleased that he copped it out of the story and ran it in the caption—'sobbing her way into twelve stony hearts!' "

By this time Kate had begun to understand that this pretty, richly dressed young woman with whom she had talked that afternoon, and whom she had promised to visit, had been the heroine of some episode sufficiently sensational to be run as a daily feature for a whole week, and she thrilled at the thought that she was touching life at a dramatic point.

"Go on!" she exclaimed, breathlessly, as Lady Clara paused in her recital. "What was her story, and why did she have to tell it in court?"

"Well," said Lady Clara, ruminating as if uncertain how to begin, "it's one of the saddest and yet one of the sweetest love stories I've ever covered in my life—a heart-throb in every page. Roberta's husband is a brute if ever there was one, and to think

that she's tied to that man for life is enough to make you doubt that there's a God in heaven."

"But," interrupted Kate, "I heard her say that hers was a marriage in the sight of God!"

"She didn't mean *that* marriage, dear. You see, it was this way. She was a mere child when she married—so young that she didn't know the difference between good and evil. Her husband never understood her, and, besides, he was jealous and suspicious, and used to make an awful fuss if she so much as looked at another man. One night he brought a friend home to dinner—mind you, it was *he* that brought him into *her* life; she didn't go out and look for him—and the moment their eyes met her poor starved soul told her that this was the man she'd been waiting for. I don't wonder, either, for he's simply the loveliest man that ever lived, and if God ever made a grand actor in His own image, He did it when He sent Walter Floodmere to brighten this world."

Lady Clara was of that numerous class that address the deity more frequently in conversation than in prayer. This habit of hers had shocked Kate during the earlier stages of their intimacy, but she was becoming accustomed to it now, as she was to many things in Lady Clara's philosophy.

"From the first moment of their meeting," rambled on the excellent Lady Clara, "it was all up with both of them. If ever there was a sweet, pure, beautiful romance, it was theirs. For two weeks it was like a lovely dream, and then the husband got wise to it and made a dreadful scene. He said perfectly horrid things to Roberta, and told Walter never to come near the flat again. But of course

that couldn't keep them apart, and one day he found them together in the Park and drew a pistol and tried to kill Walter, but he managed to get hold of his hand just in time, and the pistol went off and tore a big hole in his breast. It's a pity it didn't kill him!"

"In Mr. Floodmere's breast?" asked Kate, breathlessly.

"No, Roberta's husband. So of course it all came out, and they tried him for shooting himself or trying to shoot Walter—I've forgotten which—and I covered the story and got acquainted with Roberta. Walter was magnificent on the witness-stand. Swore that she was as pure as a lily, and that he honored and respected her as much as his own sister. As for Roberta, if you could have seen her sobbing out her pitiful little story your heart would have bled for her as mine did. The case made so much talk that she had several offers from managers right away, and that's how she came to go on the stage."

"And her husband? What became of him?" asked Kate.

"Oh, he went out West somewhere. I don't know what became of him; but Walter behaved like a perfect gentleman, and he'd marry her to-morrow if it wasn't for her husband. That's all that stands between them and perfect happiness, the poor dears!"

In writing her weekly letter to her mother Kate did not mention Roberta Rowenna. To have said that she had made the acquaintance of an actress would have led to awkward questionings on the part of the elder woman, and she was quite sure that her mother would fail to "understand" Mrs. Rowenna's case or to view it through the spectacles of Lady

Clara's easy-going philosophy. But she told her about Ernest Telford, "the one really intellectual man she had met," and gave a description of him that she knew would convince her mother that she was prospering socially as well as professionally.

CHAPTER X

IT was the literary quality of Kate's work that first attracted Telford's attention and caused him to stop at her desk one morning and speak to her about it.

"You ought to feel complimented," said Lady Clara. "It's the first time I ever knew Mr. Telford to pay any attention to anything written on the woman's page. He's always been against the page, anyway. Says it's sloppy mush."

"Well, isn't it?" inquired Kate.

"I suppose it is," admitted Lady Clara, "but they're all like that. It wouldn't do to print any really good stuff—not for women. They wouldn't like it."

Kate had wondered from the first at the inferior quality of the matter offered by Lady Clara to the *Megaphone's* feminine readers, and now she determined to ask Mr. Telford whether he thought all New York women were as feeble-minded as Lady Clara assumed them to be.

An opportunity soon came; and Telford, having listened with grave attention to what she had to say, replied:

"My dear young lady, you are just beginning to learn that women themselves are their own worst enemies. Down in the bottom of their hearts the best as well as the worst of them despise their own

sex, no matter what they may say to the contrary. If you want to realize the contempt in which women hold their sisters, put one of them in charge of a woman's page in a daily newspaper. Let's see what you're giving them to-day."

He picked up a copy of the *Megaphone* and ran his eye over the columns edited by Lady Clara, while Kate, looking over his shoulder, realized more than ever before the utter banality of it all.

"'How Two Dozen Hens Took My Daughter Through College'!" read Mr. Telford. "I suppose that will be followed by 'How Two Rabbits Clothed the Baby'! Why on earth does Mrs. Grimmond print those preposterous yarns? And here's a series of 'Practical Hints on Playwriting' by Dolly Deering. May I ask who Dolly Deering is and how it happens that she is able to enlighten the public on such a difficult and little understood subject?"

"She's that shabby little woman who sits in the corner and does the family recipes. Mrs. Grimmond tries to help her all she can."

"And who wrote that puff of—what's her name? Roberta Rowenna! Who in the world is she?"

"She's an actress, a friend of Mrs. Grimmond's."

"And Mrs. Grimmond proves her friendship by giving her half a column of free and probably undeserved puffery in Mr. Barshfield's newspaper. In other words, she's playing with her employer's chips. I hope none of *your* friends figure on the page."

"No," replied Kate, "I haven't any friends to oblige, I'm sorry to say."

"You ought to be glad, not sorry, that you haven't got a swarm of people working you for favors. They're not friends, you know, these women that

are always after something. That's Mrs. Grimmond's weakness, and it will prove her ruin some day. Don't you ever yield to that temptation."

Kate pondered over the words of the rewriter and realized the truth contained in them. That afternoon she repeated them to Lady Clara and took pains to mention Telford's prediction that her policy of obliging her friends at the cost of the paper would, if persisted in, prove her ruin.

"I'd like to know what business it is of his!" exclaimed Lady Clara, angrily. "I should feel ashamed of myself if I refused to help some poor deserving woman every time I had a chance."

"Yes, but do you think it's right to use the paper for that purpose? It's like taking the money from the office till to pay your private debts with. If you want to help any of these friends of yours—and I don't believe they're real friends—do it out of your own pocket."

"But I can't, because my pocket's empty," rejoined Lady Clara, simply. "I just gave my last ten dollars to poor Charley Densmore, who's getting over a bat and wants to straighten up and get to work again."

"Do you mean to say you gave ten dollars to that wretched, drunken reporter!" exclaimed Kate, indignantly. "I don't see how he had the face to ask for it."

"What else could I do?" said Lady Clara, in tones of pathetic meekness. "He told me his wife was sick and there wasn't a penny in the house to buy food with. That ten dollars will put him on his feet again."

"Of course there's no money for food if he spends

it all for whisky," rejoined Kate, sharply. "And besides, I don't think your ten will go to any such useful purpose as putting him on his feet again. He's probably spending it in some rum-shop at this very moment."

And two hours later, as they were passing the door of the Brasserie of Hard Times on their way home, they saw Densmore emerge and start on his unsteady march toward the street-car.

It was after seven o'clock that night when the two women left the office, the younger exhausted from her long day's work and the still unaccustomed noise and rush of the big town. The great exodus of toilers from the lower part of the city had ended; Harlem, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and the Long Island, Westchester, and New Jersey suburbs had gathered them in for the night, and the Broadway car in which they seated themselves was almost empty and the great thoroughfare free from interfering traffic as they rolled up-town. The contrast between the quiet of the after-business hours and the tumult that reigned on the daily trip down-town at noon impressed itself forcibly on Kate's mind. It was still new and strange to her, and as she gazed at the tall buildings, with their closed and padlocked doors and the iron shutters pulled down over their windows, she wondered at the magnitude of the city's commerce and asked herself how much money was rolled up behind those walls of steel and stone and where and by whom it was all spent. Later, when she became familiar with the upper part of the city, she often wondered, as many have wondered before her, where all the money came from that was spent there so recklessly.

Another thought that was borne in upon her as the car journeyed on past one block after another of great, silent loft buildings was her own helplessness as an unimportant, unconsidered human atom in this endless chain of money getting and spending. That she was permitted to take even an insignificant part in one of the numerous activities of this nerve-center of the country was due to an act of grace on the part of Penfield, while he, in his turn, owed his living to the *Megaphone*. What would become of her were he to lose interest in her (the mere thought was appalling) or to find among the thousands of women with which the town swarmed one better able to help and hold him? Then she remembered, as she had already remembered more than once, but with a keener anxiety now and a deeper depression at the heart, his warning to keep their intimacy a secret. Could it be that he had already found some one else to take her place?

"It's too much trouble to get dinner at home to-night. Let's get off and go to a lovely little *table d'hôte* that I know. It's only sixty-five cents with wine, and I touched the cashier for ten dollars in advance to-day."

Thus did Lady Clara break in upon her anxious thoughts with a welcome suggestion, and a moment later they left the car and journeyed westward down a quiet side-street to the little old-fashioned house that sheltered the French restaurant.

Kate Craven never forgot the impression received on her mind when she entered the room that had once served as a front drawing-room, separated only by folding-doors from one precisely similar in size and dimensions, and saw for the first time in her

life a New York *table d'hôte* in full blast. The spectacle was destined to become a familiar one to her; but that first impression was never effaced from her memory.

It must be remembered that her worldly experiences had up to this moment been of the most limited kind. Prior to her arrival in New York she had never seen a large city or conceived of the infinite variety of life and customs to be found in one. And now the contrast between the cold, shabby, gloomily silent side-street, whose shadowy doorways and windy corners had held unknown terrors for her as she passed them clinging timidly to her companion's arm, and the brightly lighted room crowded with diners dimly seen through overhanging clouds of tobacco-smoke, was almost startling. Following meekly in the wake of Lady Clara, who walked swiftly through the room, searching with keen eyes for an unoccupied table, Kate thought that she saw the familiar face of Ned Penfield staring at her through the mist.

"Sit down here, Mrs. Grimmond," said a cheerful voice; and Kate dropped into a chair at a corner table, fully conscious of the heightened color of her cheeks, for every eye had been fixed upon her as she passed down the room.

"Miss Craven, allow me to present Mr. Bruce Penhallow, the dramatic editor of the *Megaphone*," said Lady Clara; and Mr. Penhallow, who had politely risen to his feet to welcome them, bowed and extended a cordial hand. Kate noticed that he was short and rotund, and that his manner was cordial and deferential, especially when he addressed himself to Lady Clara. She noticed this because it

had seemed to her that in the *Megaphone* office Lady Clara was usually greeted with friendly familiarity rather than with the respect due to a woman of her years and experience.

Kate had seated herself with her back to the other diners, and she wondered now if she had really seen Ned Penfield or only dreamed it. But she did not dare to look around, and, besides, she remembered Ned's command that for a time at least they were to meet as strangers.

Meanwhile the proprietor of the place, an undersized Frenchman of smiling aspect and alert movement, had welcomed Lady Clara in a few polite words while placing on the table a quart bottle of red wine and a small dish containing a few radishes and olives and half a dozen anchovies—the smallest fish that Kate had ever seen served at a meal. Lady Clara picked hungrily at these delicacies and talked to Mr. Penhallow, explaining to him Kate's connection with the Woman's Page and assuring him that with the exception of herself the child had not "a single friend in New York"—a lie that flowed so easily and naturally from her lips that, even with Penfield in her mind, and perhaps actually in the room, it sounded to Kate almost like the truth.

The waiter now brought two plates of thick soup liberally coated with grated cheese, placed on the table two large glasses half filled with cracked ice, and removed the cork from the bottle of wine. The hum of conversation rose above the rattle of the dishes and cutlery, and Kate wished that she had seated herself beside Penhallow instead of opposite to him, so that she could have had a better view of the company. The women within her range of vision

seemed so gaily attired that she wondered if it had been her country dress, of which she was becoming more and more conscious every moment, that had caused every one to stare at her as she made her way down the room.

"How would you like Mr. Penhallow's job?" said Lady Clara, as she dissected with delicate skill the framework of fin, head, and vertebræ named on the menu as "perches." "All he has to do is to go to the theater every night and go behind the scenes when he feels like it, and come down to the office as late as he pleases. On Sundays he dines with some fascinating actress, and goes to the most delightful receptions where fashion and genius mingle together."

"I really believe," said Penhallow, solemnly, "that among the many carnal desires and absurd longings that are the chief inheritance of the human race, the desire to go behind the scenes and be introduced to actresses stands pre-eminent. Second to that is the craving for free tickets. Men will *sometimes* refuse a drink, but never a chance to get inside a theater for nothing. As for going behind the scenes, that ranks ahead of Paradise in the popular estimation. And there's precious little to see when you get there, and no drinking wine out of actresses' slippers or any such nonsense as you read about written by women who were never back of the curtain line in their lives. And there's not so much wickedness there, either, if the truth must be told."

"Well, how stands the office battle?" inquired Lady Clara, lowering her voice and leaning across the table. "You needn't be afraid to speak before Miss Craven. She's as mum as an oyster."

"I should say that both sides are resting on their

arms just at present," he replied, with an air of non-committal prudence.

"Come now, Bruce," persisted Lady Clara, "you're right in the very heart of office politics and know everything that's going on. Can't you tip an old pal off so she'll get some idea as to where she stands? And, by the way, while you're listening round the steps of the throne, you might keep your ear open, and even ask a question now and then so as to find out how the Woman's Page is regarded by the royal eye."

"I think," said Penhallow, speaking confidentially and glancing cautiously about him, as if suspecting some hostile presence, "that in the main you're quite secure; but I happen to know that the royal eye would be pleased to observe evidence of a little new blood and a few fresh ideas in the page."

"That's just what Miss Craven's here for!" exclaimed Lady Clara. "Born and brought up in the country, never in New York before in her life, she ought to be just full of new ideas and fresh impressions. If hers isn't new blood, then there isn't any in Park Row."

"At any rate," replied Penhallow, "she hasn't got her mind all clogged up with stale Park Row fetishes and traditions like the rest of us. So you're from the country, Miss Craven? New England?"

"No," said Kate; "I'm from up the state—near Utica." It was only her quick presence of mind that saved her from mentioning Graytown, and she colored prettily as she thought how nearly she had revealed her secret. Penhallow seemed on the point of making further inquiries, but Lady Clara promptly diverted the conversation into safer channels, saying:

"Now, Bruce, you might as well tell me everything you know. I'm so far away from the throne that I never hear anything. What does this resting on their arms signify?"

"I rather think," answered Penhallow, "that both sides realize that they may have to come together temporarily in order to make war against a common enemy."

"Yes?" queried Lady Clara, with an intensity that seemed strange to Kate, who could not understand how office rivalries could affect the Woman's Page; "and who's the common enemy?"

"He's sitting right behind you now with his back to us. Look around and you'll see him." As he spoke he noted with admiring eye the pretty flush of color in Kate's face.

Lady Clara turned in her seat. A single quick glance told his meaning. "You don't mean Penfield, do you?" she exclaimed, in surprise. "I'd no idea he'd climbed high enough to be regarded as important."

"He's been going up the steps of the throne two steps at a time," rejoined the dramatic editor, with the air of one who knows. "He's called into the private office about every other day, and only last night he went out to dinner with the great white Czar. I saw them in Delmonico's with their heads knocking together over the table." And again Penhallow admired, but failed to understand, the quickly changing color of the pretty face before him.

"Well, that's news to me!" exclaimed Lady Clara, thoughtfully. "I knew he pulled a strong oar, but I must say that in all the years I've been in Park

Row I've never known any one to climb as high in such a short space of time."

"He's had his salary raised right along," continued Penhallow, "and I'm told he's pulling out a hundred and a quarter a week; but he's so close-mouthed you'd never guess it."

And this time Kate not only flushed, but gave a little gasp of astonishment which caused the critic to plume himself on his success in the art of imparting astounding information. Now he turned from the dazed Lady Clara and addressed the young girl quickly.

"Mrs. Grimmond says you've only been in Park Row a short time, Miss Craven, but if you've put in your time well you've probably learned the advisability of standing in with the powers that be. Penfield's just getting ready to leave. Suppose I bring him over and introduce him?"

"Have I met Mr. Penfield yet?" inquired Kate of Lady Clara, almost hating herself for the hypocrisy, yet enjoying the thought that she was in the heart of an intrigue.

"I don't think so," she replied, and then added: "Bring him over, Bruce! Kate ought to meet him anyway." And a moment later the young girl, still feeling uncomfortably the deceit she was practising, found herself staring, without a sign of recognition, into Ned Penfield's coal-black eyes and murmuring that she was pleased to meet him.

By this time Penhallow had finished his dinner, while the two women had reached the salad stage of what seemed to the unsophisticated Kate a wonderful banquet. It was eight o'clock, and the critic was due at the theater at a quarter past, so he paid

his check, together with that of the others, who, he insisted gallantly, had been dining as his guests, and marched out, leaving his place to Penfield.

"Well, Neddy, did I act the part well?" asked Kate.

"You certainly did," was his smiling answer. "And it was a great relief to me, too, for I'd been wondering how soon I should be able to make your acquaintance. It's a great thing to keep a secret in the *Megaphone* office. Isn't it, Lady Clara?"

"It certainly is," replied Mrs. Grimmond, and then added, as she dipped her fingers in her glass of water and wiped them on her cottony napkin: "I'm awfully tired and want to go home and into a dressing-sacque just as soon as ever I can. Now that you two young people have been properly introduced, I've no hesitation in leaving you together."

CHAPTER XI

"OH, Neddy, I began to think I should never see you again!" cried Kate, the moment they found themselves alone. "The city frightens me—it's so big and noisy and so bitterly cold and heartless. I caught a glimpse of you as we came in, and I almost began to cry."

"Oh, you'll get over that pretty quick. You're just a little homesick, that's all!" said Penfield, indifferently; but his face took on a look of interest as Kate continued:

"And what that Mr. Penhallow told us about you and the other men in the office didn't make me feel any better either."

"What did he tell you?" demanded Ned, eagerly, bending across the table to catch her words.

"I didn't half understand it, but he said he thought the two opposing forces in the office were going to make common cause against you, just because Mr. Barshfield likes you and asked you out to dinner. Did he really do that, Neddy, and is it true that you're earning all that money already—a hundred and a quarter? I think it's perfectly wonderful. Why, with only half that we could—" She paused as Penfield broke in, ignoring her last words:

"Yes, I went out to dinner with him last night, and I'm to meet him at his home next Sunday; but it beats me how quick such things get around."

"Mr. Penhallow saw you in Delmonico's," said Kate.

"Probably sneaking around — like the rest of them!" said Penfield, savagely. "Well, they'd better be careful how they get up against me. I'm stronger now with the throne than most of those fellows that have been working on the paper for years before I was ever heard of. And I'm going to be a blamed sight stronger yet before I quit the game. Tell me, did he say anything else?"

"Well, he gave me the idea that there was a conspiracy against you; but really, Ned, he didn't say a word against you or give the idea that he was hostile to you. In fact, he spoke nicely about you and said you were getting a splendid salary."

"Don't believe anything you hear about a Park Row salary until you've divided the amount by four!" exclaimed Penfield, with a note of annoyance that bordered on anger. "I only wish I had half the money some of those fellows get in their minds."

"But you are doing well, Neddy, aren't you?" asked Kate, timidly, realizing with a sinking at the heart that now, for the first time in their intimacy, he was withholding his confidence from her.

"Well enough for a beginner," he replied, almost brusquely, and then made haste to add: "What would be wealth in Graytown is poverty in New York. Well, suppose we move along. I've got to go back to the office to-night, and I suppose you're ready to go to bed? It's been a hard day for you, hasn't it?" he continued, with a flash of his white teeth that was something like the smile with which he had been wont to greet her in the old days, and which Kate, now for the first time in her life really

homesick, acknowledged gratefully. Another feeling, which she could neither understand nor name, was weighing down her spirits. Heart-hunger had come upon her for the first time. She had never been really in love.

"Now, Kitty," said Penfield, as he left her at the apartment hotel, "you've heard enough to-night to gain some sort of an idea of what I'm up against in the office. If you try to climb fast or high in Park Row there are always plenty of men—and women, too, for that matter—who'll be glad of a chance to pull you down. Take a tip from me and be careful whom you trust, and don't ever let any one guess how you stand toward me. Above all, keep your ears open, and if you get wise to any game that's being put up against me let me know at once. Forewarned is forearmed, you know, and you and I will have to sink or swim together in the *Megaphone* ocean. Good night, dear; remember I trust you and rely on you to do your best for me."

He was gone, with a warm pressure of the hand and another flash of the white teeth; and Kate Craven went up to her room with happiness shining in her face, suspicion banished from her mind, and the sinking gone from her heart. Neddy's trust in her was as great as ever. He still depended on her as he had in the old Graytown days that now seemed so far away. Unselfishly she gloried in his success, deeming herself the most favored of women because of his dependence on her. The maternal instinct swelling within her breast had driven out all less worthy feelings.

As a matter of fact, Penfield was building up a great reputation in the *Megaphone* office, and build-

ing far better and more rapidly than he knew. There is no calling, not even the stage, in which ability gains recognition as quickly as in journalism—that is to say, when the planets are in favorable conjunction. Many a young reporter awakes in the morning to find himself famous within the confines of Park Row. A single news story of exceptional quality, a bit of vivid description, a new form of humorous expression, a touch of unexpected pathos, will be the talk of every newspaper office and the neighboring cafés before the sun has reached the meridian. And the hearty, generous praise that a young writer will receive from his comrades—many of whom are his rivals in the fierce fight for space—and even from drudging hacks and broken-down reporters who have long since seen their own hopes of literary achievement grow dim and vanish altogether, is a source of constant wonder to me. Every successful newspaper man will, I think, say that his earliest encouragement came to him from his own city-room. Even the worn-out and hopeless ones of the Brasserie of Hard Times are quick to notice and comment in kindly, appreciative fashion on the work of a bright new pen.

Penfield's pen was flippant and irreverent rather than witty, and the fact that he had no background, so far as New York was concerned, and was imbued with all the small-minded man's contempt for his betters gave a latitude to his flippancy and a consequent zest to his work that appealed strongly to Barshfield, who is himself without background of any sort, and has always avoided any social, political, or mercantile affiliations that might affect his newspaper. Moreover, Penfield's long apprentice-

ship in the work of carefully combing the countryside for every bit of neighborhood gossip had sharpened his naturally acute "news scent" to an abnormal degree, and fitted him for dealing with the larger and more significant affairs of metropolitan life, as well as with the unconsidered trifles that an adroit pen can transform into events of importance.

Barshfield, who had been attracted to him from the first by reason of his ability as a news-gatherer and the feminine quality in his work, now began to view him in a larger light as a young man whom it might be wise to push forward in the direction of the high places in the office. Not that he had any intention of displacing any one of the few who occupied the seats of the mighty on the steps of the throne, but because it was dangerous, in his opinion, to allow the recipients of his highest favors to believe that they could not be replaced in case of necessity.

Although apparently unconscious of even the existence of such a thing as office politics beneath the *Megaphone* roof, Barshfield is quick to notice any move on the strategic board, while in the art of pitting one adversary against another he is absolutely without a peer. From the earliest years of his reign, following the custom of his father, he had sought to maintain the balance of power by "playing two favorites," as Park Row phrased it; that is to say, he would divide the marks of his confidence and esteem between two of his employees in such a way that each one, though suspicious and jealous of the other, would render him the more efficient service. He is also adept in the crafty art of inducing one man to spy on another.

Barshfield's policy has always been to obtain the

best cooks he could find and let them do their best with whatever material the day brought to hand. He expects them, at least, to know how to make bricks without straw, so that the circulation, which he worships as a god, may not suffer during those periods when the town is quiet and sensational happenings few. But he realizes, of course, that the more pungent the contents of the pot, the better the morning's brew, and although the news-gatherer never ranks in his estimation with the chef who prepares and seasons it to the public taste, nevertheless he knows to the full the value of the reportorial instinct.

It happened that at the moment of which I write the *Megaphone* was without any strong reporter. Writers and editors it had in plenty, but there was no one on the staff who seemed to Barshfield to possess the instinct for news and the ability to gather it in the same degree as Penfield, who was acquiring a knowledge of the town with surprising familiarity, and had a remarkable knack for making acquaintances of politicians, police officers, theatrical folk, and other fountain-heads of news supply. By special orders handed down from the throne Penfield received many of the most important assignments, and Barshfield never failed to read his reports with close attention, sometimes even sending for them in proof before the paper went to press. All this, of course, was soon voiced around the city-room, and there were not a few who began to turn smiling faces toward one who might soon be in a position to give out assignments himself. And it was quite true, as Penhallow had said, that Ned Penfield's salary was now a hundred and twenty-five

dollars a week; but he had said nothing to Kate about the change in his fortunes.

If Kate had been living in Graytown she would have had time to think about Penfield's want of frankness, but her life now was so busy and so full of interest and excitement and novelty that she was quite ready to accept his assurance of continued devotion at its face value, contenting herself with the thought that if he was half as busy as she was he had no time to fall in love with any one else. A still greater source of consolation to her was the knowledge of his need of her help and counsel in the difficult fight that she saw looming up before them both. For of course they must stand or fall together; of that there could be no manner of doubt. Her own life was becoming richer day by day in interest and in the delights of easily acquired knowledge and experience. By exercise of her own good taste and the small sum of money she had brought from home, she soon altered her dress so as to present a distinctly urban appearance—a change that was instantly noted by the connoisseurs of the staff, and elicited warm expressions of approval from Lady Clara, who had always feared to wound her feelings by criticizing her attire.

"Kate," said this excellent woman, one day as they were lunching together, "I want you to go up and interview Mrs. Chilton-Smythe for me."

"What!" exclaimed the young girl, in amazement. "That famous society woman? She'd never see me in the world."

"She'll see you fast enough," said Lady Clara, confidently. "Just go up there and send in your card and tell her you want to get her views on any

old thing you happen to think of." And Kate, with an awful sinking in her heart, went away on her foolish mission.

Two hours later she returned, her face radiant with delight, bearing in her hands a bunch of violets and a large brown envelope from which she drew and proudly exhibited a signed photograph of the famous leader of fashion.

"I was never so surprised in my life!" she cried, excitedly. "She wasn't a bit stuck up or haughty, but sent for me to come up to her sitting-room—"

"Call it a boudoir in your story," interposed Lady Clara.

"And when she found I was new to the interviewing business she seemed to take a real interest, and invited me to come and see her whenever I wanted material for a nice article. Then she told me a whole lot about a summer hotel for working-girls she's getting up—I've enough for nearly a volume—and when I was coming away she gave me these lovely flowers and this photograph of herself, with permission to use it in the paper. She said all the other papers wanted it, but she'd rather that I had it. She was so handsome and so beautifully dressed that I think I ought to write something awfully nice about her."

A few days later Kate received a flattering note from Mrs. Chilton-Smythe thanking her for her kind mention of the working-girls' hotel and complimenting her on her fine literary style. From this time on she did a great deal of interviewing, and soon found that among the minor celebrities—and not a few of the great ones—a reporter was a guest to be courted rather than shunned. Not a day

passed that did not add to the number of her acquaintances. She was becoming friendly, too, with some of the members of the staff, notably Telford, who frequently stopped for a brief chat. One morning she found a note on her desk from him asking her to go to the theater with him that evening. He was often called upon to criticize plays. It was not much of a piece, he said, but if it bored her they could come away early. The idea of leaving any "show" before the last fall of the curtain seemed astounding to her, for a playhouse was to her a veritable place of enchantment.

"Do you think it will be quite proper for me to go with him?" she inquired of Lady Clara; and the other laughed heartily at her rural simplicity.

"Why shouldn't you go if you want to?" she demanded. "My dear," she continued, "take a tip from me and don't miss any of the pleasures of this life just because you're afraid they're not proper. There are not so many innocent pleasures coming our way that we can afford to let any of them get by."

As the night was clear, they walked to the theater, or, rather, it seemed to Kate that they were swept along by the great, hurrying crowd of pleasure-seekers that filled the sidewalks of Broadway and poured into the open doors of the playhouses.

The piece was a musical comedy with foolish songs sung by a throaty tenor and a bevy of girls in a succession of costumes that seemed to shrink as the evening wore on. Never before had Kate seen women clad in tights or wearing such low-cut bodices, but it did not shock her. On the contrary, the sight of women who had emancipated themselves

from the thraldom of skirts gave her new courage and raised her spirits. She even wondered how it would feel to wear such clothes herself, and the mischievous thought of presenting herself at the office clad in flesh-colored tights seized her fancy and brought a smile to her face that showed her dimples to the best advantage.

When the play was over they went to a near-by district telegraph office, where Telford wrote his notice in company with two or three other critics similarly employed, while Kate sat beside him humming the air with which the audience had been "played out" by the theater orchestra—the management having an interest in the "song rights"—and smiling happily to herself.

"And now for something to eat," said Telford, as he handed his copy to a messenger-boy and bade him hurry to the *Megaphone* office at top speed. They found seats at a small table in a great garish restaurant that he called a "lobster-palace," and which his companion thought even more interesting than the French *table d'hôte*. Here she beheld for the first time in her life a typical Broadway supper crowd, and for several minutes she gazed about her, fascinated at the spectacle. Then Telford, having given his order to the waiter, began to point out the local celebrities.

"That man at the next table is a very distinguished gambler temporarily out of business because of a reform wave that is now sweeping over the town. You'd never guess the calling of that gentleman with the bright, restless eyes who's sitting with the pretty woman in blue. He's one of the slickest confidence men on Broadway, and he, too, is suffer-

ing from the great business depression caused by reform. Do you recognize the lady? You saw her an hour ago, but in a different dress."

"That's the one that wore pink tights!" cried Kate, bending forward eagerly. It seemed to her wonderful to find herself so close to the actress who had sung and danced before her on the stage but an hour ago. She was pretty, too, in her street dress, but not so attractive as in her tights and low-cut bodice. Kate did not know exactly what a confidence man was, but she supposed he was some sort of swindler, and she wondered how a woman of such beauty and distinction should happen to choose a criminal as a companion. She had yet to learn that on Broadway—and on Fifth Avenue, too—the line of demarcation between honesty and crime is not always recognized or sharply defined.

"I understand he's quite a friend of hers," said Telford, carelessly, as if such an intimacy were a common thing in New York. "I see they're all on hand to-night—the cream of Broadway society." And he indicated, one after another, bookmakers, players, gray-haired roués, foolish sons of wealthy parents, famous prize-fighters, and the heroine of an unsavory divorce scandal. The froth and bubble of Broadway, so often mistaken for the real life of the town, were certainly in evidence that night, to say nothing of the great mob of out-of-town and suburban strangers who had come to look on, and who, like Kate, beheld a mirage and thought it was the real city.

Into Kate's eager, receptive mind there suddenly crept an unbidden thought of her mother, and she wondered what she would say if she could see her

here in this gaudy eating-house, learning the sinful ways of the town from the lips of a man whom she had known but a few short weeks. Already she was saying to herself, "Mother doesn't understand these things," which is just what thousands of girls have said during their initiate into metropolitan ways. But there was too much to be seen and learned to-night to leave time for fruitless speculation, and Kate's eyes were soon fixed on a group of men and women who were seating themselves at a near-by table. One of the party attracted her attention by reason of his handsome face, immaculate evening clothes, and general air of what she thought was the distinction bred of wealth and assured position. He seemed to be on the best of terms with the woman next him, for she laughed gaily as he said something to her in a low voice, and the look that she gave him was one of unmistakable liking. The woman was handsome in a striking way, with a full figure that had not yet become obese, and superb red hair. Her dress was not only costly, but in good taste and extremely becoming, and diamonds glittered on her fingers and her corsage.

"What magnificent clothes that woman wears!" said Kate. "She must cost her husband a lot of money."

Telford turned in his seat to glance at the new arrivals, and then made answer, "Some other woman's husband must have paid for *that* dress."

"What do you mean?" asked Kate, ingenuously. "Is it the proper thing in New York for women to accept presents of dresses and hats and furs from the husbands of their friends?"

The rewrite-man gazed thoughtfully at her over

the tops of his eye-glasses. "Do you mean to say that you don't understand me, or is this merely one of your little pleasantries?" he asked.

"Oh, I understood what you said, but it seemed funny, that's all," replied Kate, in tones that showed her complete ignorance of the situation.

"It is a funny custom, I admit," he said, gravely. "Lady Clara knows how it originated and why it is still kept up in certain grades of society. Ask her about it when you get home to-night, and tell her that you saw some famous society women wearing particularly gorgeous garments."

As Kate entered the apartment hotel in which she lived she turned a beaming face on her companion and shook his hand cordially. "You've given me a perfectly splendid evening," she said, "and I don't know how to thank you."

And Telford walked away wondering if there could be found in the city of New York a girl as naïve and innocent and at the same time as interesting as this toiler of the Woman's Page.

CHAPTER XII

KATE found Lady Clara dozing in an arm-chair before the gas-log in the dining-room. "I wondered if you would come home hungry," she said, as she roused herself and sat rubbing her eyes.

"Bless your dear heart! I've had lots to eat and the first mug of ale I ever drank in my life!" cried Kate, planting an affectionate kiss on her friend's cheek. "And I've had a perfectly splendid time, too. Do you know it's the first time I ever saw a really good show? There was the prettiest song in it. I've been humming it all the way home. And, darling, there were some of the prettiest girls on the stage, dancing and singing, and some of them in tights! They did look lovely, but not any better than I would if I could dress that way. I think I'd rather be an actress than a writer if I could get a chance."

She gathered up her skirts and danced about the room with a grace and agility that were a complete surprise to the elder woman, who had hitherto known her only as a demure maiden with no thought for anything but her work. She wondered if this whirling vision of black-silk stockings, white ruffles, and flushed, laughing face could be the same girl who had asked her that very morning if it would be "quite proper" for her to go to the theater with a man.

"There's another thing I want to ask," said Kate,

pausing in her dance, but still holding up her skirts. "Do ladies in New York accept presents of dresses and hats from the husbands of their friends?"

"What in the world put that in your head?"

"Mr. Telford told me to ask you. There was a society woman in the restaurant who was magnificently dressed, and he said she got her clothes from some other woman's husband."

Mrs. Grimmond threw herself back in her chair and laughed as her assistant of the Woman's Page had never seen her laugh before.

"Kate Craven," she cried, "you have no idea how funny you are standing there with your skirts up over your knees asking such an innocent question. The proper costume for the part you're playing now is a white-muslin frock to your boot-tops and your hair in two pigtails down your back. That woman's husband probably was lost in the shuffle long ago, and so the poor thing is obliged to rely on any other husband that happens along."

"So that's why Mr. Telford didn't tell me who she was? She's a bad woman, is she? I wish I'd looked at her closer. I never saw a bad woman before—at least, not one of her kind."

"You would have seen a very good imitation of one if you'd looked in the glass a minute ago," retorted Lady Clara, dryly.

"Are there many such in the city?"

"Shoals of them."

"I think the histories of some of them must be very interesting. Do youk now any of these women?"

"Go to bed!" cried Lady Clara, suddenly rising and turning off the electric light.

Kate Craven was by no means ignorant of what

are called the "mysteries of life," because everybody, especially the country-bred girl, knows all about them; but the only "bad women" of whom she had hitherto had any cognizance had been pitiable objects shunned by all decent folk and visibly suffering for their sins. Now she had seen for the first time in her life a courtesan in the full pride and glory of her calling, courted rather than shunned, bowing right and left to her acquaintances, and receiving cordial recognition in return, and now—she scarcely knew why—the thought of this woman triumphing over established conventions of society and the prejudices of her sex thrilled her with a secret joy.

Like many good women, Kate Craven was curious in regard to the sides of life from which she had been debarred by the respectability of her birth and upbringing. The mystery surrounding the life of a woman beyond the pale of society appealed to her imagination, and she wished now that she had questioned Telford more closely about her career. That this one's fall had been due to some love affair she did not doubt, and it was this element of romance that appealed strongly to her soul, already awakened to sentimental influences by a course of edifying "heart-interest" stories. Here was a real love tragedy, and she determined to question Telford without delay.

Let it be understood that Kate was not a prurient young woman. She was simply, like many of the best of her sex, extremely inquisitive. As she fell asleep that night her mind was filled with confused thoughts of girls—among them herself—in flesh-colored tights, and Ernest Telford in his rôle of

mentor. For once Penfield was absent from her dreams.

The wished-for opportunity to increase her store of worldly knowledge came about a week later, when the rewrite-man, meeting her on her way down-town, suggested that they should have luncheon together at a little French restaurant. As soon as the waiter had taken their order Kate remarked with a frankness that was even a greater surprise to herself than it was to him:

"I asked Mrs. Grimmond about that woman, and she told me how she got her dresses. Now, I wish you'd tell me more about her and her kind."

Telford glanced keenly at her over the tops of his glasses and said: "You seem to be getting on rapidly. You were so innocent the other night that I was sorry I even hinted at her means of livelihood. What do you wish me to tell you?"

"Everything that it will be proper for me to hear. I'm curious to learn all I can about women of her class, the romance of their lives, how they live, and what becomes of them in the end."

"It seems to me," said the other, "that the term 'proper for you to hear' is rather an elastic one. I should hate to offend you, and yet I don't know where, in your mind, propriety ends and impropriety begins."

"I can trust you," said Kate, simply.

"I'm afraid that romance, as you call it, has not played a very important part in Maude Thornbright's life," said Telford, speaking slowly and thoughtfully. "Her husband was a decent enough fellow, but without ambition, and Maude had tastes in the way of champagne, fine clothes, and auto-

mobile-scorching that he was not able to gratify. As you may have noticed the other night, she is still a good-looking woman. A few years ago she was a beauty, and if a beautiful woman starves in this town it's either through her own fault or her own virtue. Ever since I've known her—and that's a matter of about five years—Maude has been a high-flier. While her husband was working in a down-town office she would be floating about Broadway, going to matinées, drinking cocktails with the sort of people that a pretty woman can easily scrape acquaintance with, and spending every cent she could lay her hands on. She ran her husband so deeply in debt that he had to call a halt, and of course if he couldn't pay for her clothes some one else had to, and there you are. I hope I haven't crossed the propriety line?"

"Not yet," rejoined Kate. "Now go on and tell me the rest of her story. Do you really know her? How did you get acquainted with such a person?"

A smile flitted across the other's face. "Such persons are not hard to know," he replied. "Indeed, the difficulty in this town is to avoid knowing them. I really don't remember how I got acquainted with Maude, but I've known her quite a while, and once in a while we sit down together and have a chin. She's quite amusing in a way. But she's without heart, and where there's no heart there's no romance."

"You haven't told me yet who pays for her clothes."

"I think that precious privilege is shared by a little group of her admirers."

Kate's eyes fell before Telford's cynical smile,

and a slight color suffused her cheek as the last shred of romance was stripped from Maude Thornbright, leaving only sordid harlotry.

"What will be her end?" she asked. "With her extravagant habits she can't save any money, and the time will come when men will cease to pay for her clothes."

"By that time," rejoined the other, "she will have salted away enough to make her declining years comfortable, and perhaps enable her to provide for some man like that young fellow who sat next her the other night."

The young girl's face assumed a look of disgust that she did not attempt to hide. Except for her clothes and jewels and the deference with which she was treated, this woman, who had awakened her interest and around whom she had woven a romance, was precisely the same as the few wretched members of the great sisterhood whom she had seen in Graytown. Women do not more readily forgive those who rob them of their illusions than they do those who steal their pocketbooks, and she was sorry now that she had questioned Telford so eagerly—sorry for her own folly and secretly annoyed with him for answering her so plainly. But there was still one question that she must ask, and she put it to him bluntly:

"Do you mean to tell me that a woman of that sort supports a man?"

"Even the most selfish of them contrive to do that. You see, every woman, no matter how bad she may be, has somewhere in her heart a soft spot in the shape of a longing to be loved, and so long as that soft spot exists there will always be some man to

play on it. By the way, you noticed how that young man was dressed—I remember now that you spoke of it."

"He was certainly beautifully dressed. There was something in his manner of wearing his clothes, or perhaps it was the clothes he had on, that somehow made him seem an interesting personality."

"There was something either in his clothes or his manner of wearing them that told me that a woman had paid for them," replied Telford. "Remember, whenever you see a man whose style of dress appeals to you, as this man's did, not to trust him till you find out who has paid his bills. I think it's time for us to be going down to the office. I trust that this has been an instructive session?"

As they walked toward Broadway Kate noticed two or three young men in cheap, gaudy attire lounging in front of a corner saloon smoking cigarettes and gazing with evil eyes at the girls who went by.

"What terrible-looking men!" she exclaimed, flushing indignantly under the lewd glances that they turned toward her.

"Then you don't regard them as interesting personalities?" remarked Telford. "You ought to, for they are of the same class as that young man whom you saw in the restaurant, but with this difference, that they are not nearly as well dressed. By the way, I didn't tell you who that attractive youth is. Well, he's Lady Clara's son."

The young country girl stopped short and stared at her companion in amazement. "Lady Clara's son! And that woman supports him!" she gasped.

"Yes, she and his mother together. That's what

keeps Lady Clara poor. It's her own fault, too, in a way, for it was she who first brought the two together. Maude came into the focus about two years ago in some sensational way, and Lady Clara was sent out on the story. There was a sentimental side to it, of which the paper was not slow to take advantage, and Maude became a daily feature. That was all right from a business point of view, but Lady Clara made the mistake of believing what she wrote herself, and so she asked this woman to her flat and told her son to be nice to her, and he obeyed her so implicitly that when Maude went away he went with her, and she's been looking after him ever since."

"And does poor Lady Clara never see him now?" asked Kate.

"Never except on salary-day; then he's quite apt to turn up."

And Kate was so taken up with all her newly acquired knowledge that she entirely forgot to pump Telford about the office cabal against Penfield. Forgotten now was Maude Thornbright, crowded out of her mind by pitying thoughts of poor Lady Clara and the son who remembered her only on salary-day.

Too busy that afternoon to think of anything but the necessity for getting the Woman's Page to press before nightfall, it was not until after a very late dinner that Kate found time to stretch herself on the couch in front of the cheerful gas-log, ostensibly to read, but in reality to digest some of her recently acquired knowledge. Since coming to the city the power and desirability of wealth had taken a strong hold on her imagination, and in that luxuri-

ous, brilliantly lighted, over-decorated lobster-palace she had found herself for the first time face to face with the visible symbol of that power. Her first wonderment as to where the money came from was quickly followed by the query, logically next in order, "Where does it all go to?"

The first of these questions not even the most learned student can answer, but as Kate listened to Telford's disquisition the thought that it was the women who absorbed and spent it all gradually took possession of her brain and would not be dislodged. It was the men who paid for the suppers, tossing the greenbacks to the waiters as carelessly as if they had found them in the streets instead of earning them, while the women ate and drank with superb indifference to cost. It was the women who wore the costly dresses; it was on feminine arms and necks and bosoms that the diamonds gleamed with such marvelous brilliancy. Carrying her speculations still further, she realized, wondering the while why the thought had not occurred to her before, that it was the sex element in all its infinite variety of manifestation and mystery that had animated the entire human fabric and given to the spectacle its charm and color. She tried to imagine the same scene with the women eliminated, and it crumbled before her mental vision into a vulgar herd of selfish, feeding animals—pigs crowding about a trough.

CHAPTER XIII

CERTAINLY Kate Craven was learning fast. A single evening at the theater and in a restaurant had taught her more about the power wielded by her sex over men than she had ever learned from any book of philosophy on her mother's shelves. She had seen grave men of affairs applauding women in scanty attire who sang foolish songs and smiled down upon them with painted lips. Perhaps it was in that manner that Salome sang and danced before Herod. In the light of her new knowledge it no longer seemed strange that he should have rewarded her with the head of John the Baptist on a charger. Had not Lady Clara's son brought his mother's heart and laid it at the feet of Maude Thornbright?

She saw now only too plainly what this sex-power was, and her face flushed at the thought; for she understood the meaning in the eyes of the men who looked her over as if appraising her good points; she knew why their glances had awakened in her feelings of repulsion and apprehension, and now a fierce protest against the thraldom of skirts arose in her soul.

She had often read of the power of women over men, but never before had she seen such convincing evidence of it. It seemed to her, too, that the dividing-line laid down by custom and propriety between good women and bad no longer existed.

Lady Clara had taken Maude Thornbright into her own home—to her own sorrow. Telford, unquestionably a man of gentle breeding, admitted his acquaintance with that unspeakable creature as if it were a matter of course, and apparently derived pleasure from her society. She found herself wondering how many women of this sort he consorted with and how intimately he knew them. The thought that he might at that very moment be in the power of one of them brought a quick flush to her cheek.

She rose hurriedly from her chair and glanced at her watch. It was half past ten, and she went to bed with a profound feeling of disgust in her heart for women as well as men.

On Sunday she received a note from Penfield asking her to dine with him at a quiet little French restaurant which was their usual place of meeting. They were no sooner seated than he began:

"You haven't heard anything about any office changes, have you?"

Kate had long since noticed that when Penfield asked her to dine with him it was for the purpose of discussing his own affairs, and that save for a few perfunctory questions as to how she was getting along he seldom betrayed any special interest in hers.

"I can't quite make it out," he said, "but there's something in the wind, and I've got a sort of idea that it's going to affect me. You see, nobody tells me anything because they know I'm closer to the throne than most of them—in fact, I'm about the only one in the city-room that Barshfield ever sends for, and that makes them all suspicious and jealous.

Oh, they're polite enough to my face, but I can see with half an eye that they don't like the quick way I've gone ahead since I came here."

Penfield undoubtedly had gone ahead since his arrival in New York a brassy, green, young country reporter with nothing but his keen news sense to aid him in his fight for existence. As Kate looked at him now she saw but little save the red cheeks and the coal-black eyes to remind her of the local editor of the Graytown *Eagle*, and even the cheeks had paled a little and become puffy from good living. He was well dressed and had a self-confident, almost an urban manner, and it was apparent that he prided himself on being a complete man of the world. That he was daily becoming more and more self-centered she had long since been forced to acknowledge, and the suspicion that he was gradually growing away from her brought bitterness to her heart whenever she allowed herself to think of it. To-night, however, he seemed more like the Ned Penfield of Graytown, speaking with all his old-time frankness, asking her counsel and aid, and plainly showing his great need of her.

Now the little restaurant in which they sat was as yet undiscovered by that great ravening band who dine nightly at cheap *table d'hôtes* and, migratory as the wild fowl, are for ever seeking new feeding-grounds. Situated on Houston Street many blocks to the west of the main ways of travel between uptown and down, it was frequented almost entirely by foreigners, for the most part French and Italians. It was Kate who had discovered the place while working on a "heart-interest" story in the neighborhood, and both she and Penfield regarded it as

a distinct "find," and agreed to keep their discovery to themselves. But there is no knowledge harder to lock in one's own bosom than the exact location of a cheap restaurant which is also a good one, and so it happened that on this night Macy, who had already visited the place, determined to taste once more the excellent chicken *en casserole* to which it owed its local renown.

Long years of service in the various hostile camps of Park Row had imparted to Macy's native wits a peculiarly keen edge, so that even when outside the office walls he might be said to pick his way with caution while listening with ear as sharp as a partridge's to every word let fall within his hearing. Following his usual custom, he glanced through the open door of the little eating-place before entering, and was amazed to see Kate and Penfield, with their heads bent across a small table, engaged in intimate conversation. Softly Mr. Macy turned on his heel to withdraw unobserved, but his quick eye caught a glimpse of Kate as she placed her hand on her companion's arm in intimate fashion, and his still quicker ear took cognizance of her "Neddy, dear," uttered with a note of true affection that was unmistakable to a sense as highly trained and rich in experience and subtle knowledge as that of the wily city editor.

Now, in the fierce rivalry engendered by office politics two heads are notoriously superior to one, and when one of these heads belongs to a woman it is a combination greatly to be feared. In this case not only was the woman's head a pretty one, but the combination was one hitherto unsuspected, even by the usually astute city editor, who never

failed to observe carefully the conduct of every young woman of the staff in order that he might be the first to detect any sign of coalition with any of his rivals.

Mr. Macy ate his chicken *en casserole* elsewhere that night, and while he ate he pondered.

Meanwhile the two conspirators, unconscious of the fact that they had been discovered, ate and talked across the board.

"I confess I can't understand it," said Penfield. "I'm quite sure that somebody is framing up something against me, but I can't find out who it is or what sort of a job they're putting up."

"Don't you think that both Mr. Vanderlip and Mr. Macy would be glad to see you out of the way?" asked Kate.

"Why, they're the only real friends I've got in the office," he retorted. "I owe every good assignment I've had to one or the other of them, and I happen to know that they both speak well of me to the old man, because he told me so himself. What's more, Macy asked me to dinner the other night, and I often lunch with Vanderlip."

"Beware of the Greeks bearing gifts," said Kate, shrewdly.

"But these two Greeks don't pull together, because they hate each other like poison. What I think is that each man would like to have me on his side in case it comes to a show-down between them. No, Kitty, I very much fear that this time you're on the wrong track, though as a general thing you're quite apt to be right."

They talked on for fully an hour without arriving at any definite conclusion, and Penfield threw dis-

cretion to the winds and accompanied Kate home. Lady Clara was out, and they sat before the gas-log for a long time recalling the old days in Graytown and trying to solve the problem that now confronted them. It was after ten when Penfield rose to go, and as they stood together on the hearth-rug he folded Kate in his arms and kissed her, if not with passion, at least with something like real affection, saying:

"You're certainly the truest friend and the best pal that a man ever had. I don't know what I should do without you, Kitty, darling."

And at these lover-like words Kate's starved heart fluttered in her breast, while the color came into her face and her eyes grew dim. She had been kept heart-hungry so long that a brief caress, a few affectionate words, the touch of his warm lips to hers stirred her soul to its very depths and swept from her mind all doubt of his sincerity and all recollection of his selfishness and indifference. He was still a true friend to be trusted and depended on no matter what might happen, and she fell asleep to dream of him.

I have already alluded to Miss Minturn, the sallow, lynx-eyed, sharp-featured young woman who occupied a desk in Lady Clara's office. She was a creature of Macy's, a cousin in about the third degree, whose name he had added to the pay-roll with such consummate skill that not even the most astute minds in the office suspected his handiwork. To him she owed her position; it was he who kept it for her. In return for his kindness she kept constant watch and ward over his interests, so far as affairs in the hen-coop could affect them, and con-

veyed to his ears every bit of office gossip that she heard. And as the hen-coop was a rallying and distributing point for all these unconsidered trifles of speech, her duties were by no means light. She had been suspicious of and hostile to Kate Craven from the very first because she saw in her a possible rival in the race for advancement, and these feelings became all the more keen as she noticed the growing intimacy between the new-comer and Lady Clara. Nor could she remain blind to the fact that this untrained, inexperienced young country girl was rapidly developing into an extremely good writer—by far the best of her sex on the paper. Absorbed by her own jealousy, she had never regarded Kate as a factor of the slightest importance in the game of office politics or as a menace to any one but herself. Least of all had she thought of her as an ally of Penfield, who seldom came into the hen-coop except to see Lady Clara on matters of office business.

The day after the affair of the French restaurant Mr. Macy, whose brain had in the mean time been working with even more than its usual activity and cunning, sent a note to Lady Clara asking if she could spare one of the ladies of her staff to go out on a city story. He had already made sure that Miss Minturn was the only one available. When the latter presented herself at his desk he said coldly:

"How is it that you have never given me a particle of information about this Miss Craven who sits at your very elbow? You must realize, Caroline, that it was a difficult thing for me to put you on Mr. Barshfield's pay-roll, and you may also know that there have been times when it has not been easy to keep you there. The least you can do for

me is to keep your eyes open and report to me any underhand work that might affect Mr. Barshfield's interests."

"I don't know much about her, and what I do know I don't like!" exclaimed Miss Minturn, in flurried tones, for the thought of losing her job was not a pleasant one.

"What is there about her that you don't like?" asked the city editor in his quietest accents.

"Mrs. Grimmond has her living with her, and gives her all the best assignments and does everything she can to push her along. She doesn't seem to remember that I was on the paper three years before she came here."

"I can't see how that can affect Mr. Barshfield's interests," replied Macy. "So long as she does her work well Mrs. Grimmond is perfectly right to give her good assignments, and it ill becomes a young woman in your position to show any jealousy of her. Have you noticed if she has any intimate friends among the men of the staff?"

"I heard her speak of going to the theater with Mr. Telford, but I never saw her talking to any one else."

"I don't think your eyes are as sharp as they used to be," rejoined Macy. "She seems to be new to New York. What part of the country does she hail from?"

"Some little village near Utica, she says."

"Indeed! And doesn't Mr. Penfield come from some town in that region?"

"I believe he does," replied Miss Minturn, as light began to dawn on her mind. And, seeing this, the city editor dropped the matter and proceeded to

explain the work for which he had ostensibly summoned her.

After Miss Minturn's departure Macy remained for a long time engaged in his frequent pastime of earnest thinking. It had suddenly been borne in upon him that this young girl from "somewhere near Utica," whom he had regarded as a mere pawn on the board, albeit a very pretty one, was in reality a figure of distinct importance in the struggle that lay before him.

The frequent feminine touches in Penfield's work that had always appealed so strongly to Barshfield had been a mystery to him, too, but it all seemed plain now. It was this little country girl, his sweetheart, perhaps, who had supplied them. Continuing his speculations still further, he began to see with a clearer vision. The girl had been smuggled into the office—probably with the connivance of Mrs. Grimmond—in order that she might aid him in his schemes. Hers was the ability that had brought him so rapidly to the front; hers were those fine flashes of feminine intuition that had won the high praise of their chief.

Having solved to his own satisfaction this puzzling problem, the astute city editor next turned his attention to the still more important question of how to break up the alliance. And if at the same time he could attach this clever, handsome young woman to his own chariot wheels, why, so much the better. Then he would gladly get rid of Miss Minturn, who, he felt, had neglected his interests.

As every chess-player knows, few games are won without the sacrifice of many pawns on both sides, and he who would play office politics successfully must harden his heart to the tears and the pleadings

of the little pawns who are swept ruthlessly from the board whenever the necessity arises. Generally speaking, neither Macy nor Vanderlip would hesitate to deprive a young girl of her means of livelihood to further his own ends. But now as this adroit politician sat scheming at his desk his conscience began to trouble him. No one knew better than John Macy what the struggle for existence in a big city meant to young women without money, friends, or influence. There came back to him now a memory that he had never been able to put completely out of his mind of a girl who had accosted him brazenly on Broadway one night and then turned suddenly away, but not before he had recognized her as the poor little pawn whom he himself had sacrificed to make room for Miss Minturn. He did not wish any more memories of that sort to dog his footsteps, and the more he thought of Kate Craven's pretty face and evident ignorance of worldly ways, the more he wished to avoid the sacrifice. Or, if it were found absolutely necessary, some one else must sign the warrant.

CHAPTER XIV

THE problem was a complex and difficult one, and he was still brooding over it when Tops thrust his head through the door to tell him that Mr. Barshfield desired to see him in his private office. He found his chief in consultation with Penfield, and he noticed with inward delight that the latter's attitude was one of easy self-confidence, almost imperceptibly touched with familiarity of the sort that Barshfield had never been known to tolerate. It may be said in passing that Macy owed his position largely to his intimate knowledge of his employer's personal peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, his likes and dislikes, and, above all, his ideas as to what was and what was not good journalism. To him every glance of the royal eye, every tilt of the royal nose, every twist of the royal mouth was as the printed page of an open book. Even before his chief had opened his lips he read in his smooth-shaven, well-bred face the unmistakable sign and portent of eager interest, probably in some new scheme for circulation.

"Mr. Penfield thinks," began Barshfield, speaking very rapidly, as he always did when enthusiastic over some new project, "that the convention of the Woman's Betterment Clubs in Chicago next week ought to be covered very fully. It's a matter of interest to thousands of women in New York as

well as in other cities, and I think it's a good chance to make a bid for out-of-town circulation."

"Very good," replied the city editor; "whom did you think of sending?"

"I hadn't got as far as that yet. I suppose some one from the Woman's Page. But what do you think of the idea?"

When an adroit Park Row politician has marked a man for execution he always seconds his suggestions with every appearance of heartiness, especially if they have already received the royal approval. Therefore Mr. Macy hastened to make answer in tones of enthusiasm.

"I think it's a capital idea—quite worthy of the brain from which it sprang. But just at this moment I can't think of any one we can send there. We're short-handed in the city-room, and we can't take Mrs. Grimmond off her desk. How about that Miss Craven? She's been doing some pretty good work on the Woman's Page, and I think she'll get away with this job all right. I'll send for her if you like." And a moment later Tops, with a new deference in his manner, bore the astounding summons to the hen-coop.

Kate entered the royal presence firmly believing that she was about to be discharged, though if she had been more familiar with Park Row methods she would have known that dismissal is accomplished with but scant ceremony. She was quickly reassured, however, by the gracious manner in which Barshfield received her, begged her to be seated, and then asked her if she thought she could "cover" the Chicago women's convention. As though in a haze she saw Penfield and assumed quite naturally that

it was he who had recommended her to his chief; and the thought that, despite his apparent neglect, he still had her interests at heart, made her indescribably happy. Strengthened by the belief that he was nodding encouragement to her through the haze, she answered with a modesty that was not lost on her keenly watchful chief that she would do her best.

"I'm quite sure you will," he said, smilingly; and the next morning saw Kate embarking on a journey longer than any she had ever undertaken in her life.

"A very pretty girl," remarked Barshfield, as Kate departed from his private office. "Do you know where she comes from?"

"Somewhere in New England, I think," replied Macy, carelessly; but Penfield, as the city editor shrewdly noticed, even while studiously averting his eyes, made no answer.

Arriving in Chicago, Kate hastened to the huge hotel where a room had been engaged for her by telegraph, and proceeded without delay to make herself as attractive as her wardrobe would permit. It was in the ball-room of this hostelry that the convention was to be held, and already a babel of high-pitched tongues filled the public rooms and corridors. Delegates from all parts of the country were hurrying in from every train, and Kate, who had followed the work of the Woman's Betterment Society with keen enthusiasm ever since she first read about it in the Sunday supplement in her Graytown days, now entered upon her work with a lofty zeal and reverence that set her apart from the rest of her professional sisterhood. She soon learned that the hotel, and, indeed, the rest of the town as well, literally swarmed with newspaper writers of her own

sex. Never before had she known that so many women were supporting themselves by the pen. One or two of these women she recognized as coming from various Park Row hen-coops, and there were a few from other cities whose names were familiar to her; but there were scores of others who seemed to her the mere day-laborers of journalism.

"Do tell me if Mrs. Chilton-Smythe has come yet!" cried a pudgy, breathless creature, seizing Kate by the arm. "I came all the way from Omaha more to see her than anything else, and just now somebody said that she wasn't coming after all. Do you know if she's arrived yet?"

"I really can't say," replied Kate, noticing with amusement the signs of almost hysterical excitement on the other's perspiring face. "If I see her I'll let you know," she added compassionately, recalling the time when she, too, would have been excited at the thought of gazing at this justly celebrated woman.

"Then you've seen her before!" cried the other. "I thought from your clothes that you must be from New York! Is she really as handsome as the papers make her out? Of course I know she's all style, and just nothing but style, but I do want to know if she's real pretty like her pictures. Are you one of the delegates? I suppose you must be or you wouldn't be here. Mrs. Whittlebeck's my name. I'm secretary of the Omaha chapter."

More flattered than she would have cared to admit by the stranger's allusion to her clothes, Kate explained that she was on the staff of the New York *Megaphone*, a statement that evidently raised her materially in the other's estimation.

"So you write for the papers, do you?" she said. "My, I just wisht I lived in New York. It must be awful exciting! My husband does business there, and last winter he took me with him. I was on the go every minute of the time."

Just then a thrill of excitement, followed by a solemn and reverential hush, made itself felt in the great hotel parlor, and a high-pitched voice was heard crying, "There she is now!"

Looking hastily around, Kate was amazed to see Mrs. Chilton-Smythe coming directly toward her, a vision of sartorial splendor, with smiling face and outstretched hand.

"My dear, I'm simply delighted to see you!" cried the great leader of fashion, as she took Kate's hand in both of hers. "I suppose you're reporting the convention? That's splendid! I know you'll do it in a way that will make people understand the importance of the work we are trying to do for the women of the country—I might even say of the whole civilized world."

At this moment she became conscious of the presence of the Omaha delegate who was gazing at her, round-eyed and open-mouthed.

"Do present me to your friend," said Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, who felt that she was far enough away from New York to meet almost anybody.

And Kate murmured Mrs. Whittlebeck's name and added, with distinct *empressement*, "This is Mrs. Chilton-Smythe."

"I'm very glad to meet you," said the leader of fashionable thought, with one of her most gracious smiles. "What paper do you represent?"

"No paper in particular," gasped the Omaha dele-

gate, completely stunned by the unexpected honor of finding herself face to face with the woman to see whom she had come all the way from Nebraska. At best she had aspired to gaze at her from afar off, and perhaps note the details of her costume with a view to its reincarnation in cheaper material at the hands of her own dressmaker. And now she had actually been presented to her and was basking in her gracious smile!

"No paper in particular!" repeated Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, still smiling. "I suppose that means that you write for a great many of them. Well, I shall be anxious to see what you say about us, so be sure you treat the convention with the seriousness that it deserves. Of course I shall see both of you ladies again—I hope soon and often." And with these pleasant words on her lips the New York woman moved away and lost herself in the throng.

"My, but ain't she stylish! I wonder how much her gown cost?" exclaimed Mrs. Whittlebeck, without removing her eyes from the disappearing spirit of metropolitan elegance. "I suppose you got to know her by writing up her dresses?"

"There are other ways of knowing people in New York if you happen to be presentable," retorted Kate, coldly, as she turned away.

The semi-public women who loom up so large in the mirage in which she dwelt had not lost their glamour for her; nor was she above the vanity of wishing this Omaha delegate to believe that she and Mrs. Chilton-Smythe were on the terms of friendly intimacy that might possibly have been inferred from the latter's cordial greeting; and this tactless remark, coming as it did at the very moment when

she was making mental note of every detail of the costly traveling-dress with a view to "writing it up" in the *Megaphone*, was distinctly irritating.

As Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, erect, smiling, and secure in the knowledge that she was the best-dressed woman in the room, glided through the long parlor the waves of the Woman's Betterment Convention parted silently before her, then closed in behind her, breaking like foam in a steamer's wake into a thousand sparkling bubbles of hysterical comment. A swarm of eager whispers arose like insects on a summer day. If all the gossip evoked by her appearance could have been gathered together for scientific treatment in a retort, the final analysis would have revealed the word "stylish" as the convention's verdict.

But Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's fame was founded on something more enduring than mere style. It was as a latter-day De Staël that she had challenged public attention during three successive seasons of intellectual brilliancy. She had long since found the ordinary routine of society wearisome, not only to herself, but to many of her friends. None knew better than she that it was a mirage to those who stood and gazed from afar, and that its glories faded as the gazer approached and melted into thin air as the golden gates were passed. Her wealth and beauty, neither of which suffered at the hands of an enlightened and imaginative press, had long since made her a conspicuous figure in this mirage. Everything that she said was trumpeted forth to the outside world, and even her most conventional doings received wide-spread acclaim. All this had awakened in her mind an ambition to take an active

part in the serious affairs of the world—to win for herself greater and more enduring renown than mere social position could bestow. She knew society well and was well aware that its so-called leadership was a mere will-o'-the-wisp, not worth the striving for. Society was glad to eat her dinners, cruise in her yacht, and, indeed, take everything she had to offer —do anything, in fact, except listen to her or read her pamphlets. That the circle in which she had been born and reared should be the only one that refused to take her seriously was a grievance that went far toward embittering the cup of pleasure that Providence had filled for her with such bounteous hand.

One might well ask why she clung so tenaciously to a society that refused to accept her at her own valuation, and of whose intellectual emptiness no sort of doubt existed in her mind. If her mind were seriously inclined, why not seek the society of the serious, of whom the town always has a plenty? But in bursting from the chrysalis of fashion into an intellectual butterfly Mrs. Chilton-Smythe had marked her future course with far greater shrewdness than those who laughed at her realized. She knew that so long as she remained a conspicuous figure in the mirage of fashion, so long would the great and gasping outside world listen with respect to her discourse. But let her phantom "leadership" be once assailed and her pamphlets on eugenics and Ibsen would no longer be read and discussed; her utterances on the great questions of the day would fall on indifferent or contemptuous ears. And because of this shrewd reasoning she came in due time into the unique position of one who remains

in society in order to talk. There are thousands who talk for the purpose of getting into society.

Mrs. Chilton-Smythe was not on the platform when the great congress for the betterment of her sex assembled in the hotel ball-room. She entered soon after the deliberations of that august body began and seated herself with becoming modesty and characteristic grace near the door, where her presence was quickly indicated by an eager craning of necks and buzzing of many tongues. Bidden to a place on the platform, she arose and walked smilingly down the long aisle, perfectly at her ease and apparently unaware of the fact that the congress for the amelioration of womanhood was holding its breath as one woman and taking careful note of her gown.

A thousand pairs of eyes saw that the brown traveling-suit had been exchanged for what was subsequently described in almost as many women's pages as a "creation in black *crêpe de Chine*." It was remarked also, and with no small regret, that the great leader of fashion wore no jewels, although it was currently reported that she had brought with her from New York a casket filled to the brim with those ornaments. A broad-brimmed hat adorned with a splendid plume materially heightened the beauty of her face and the graceful dignity of her carriage.

Mrs. Chilton-Smythe had, of course, come prepared to speak, and the audience that she faced was eager to listen. Her subject was the fecund one of eugenics, and she had been at pains to bring with her a paper made up of gleanings from two or three essays that she had hastily skimmed through.

"Society," said Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, "has come to the parting of the ways."

At this important utterance a solemn hush fell upon the assembly, and the speaker paused a moment so that her words of omen might sink into the brains of her audience. Believing that she was about to talk on the subject of New York society—perhaps about the monkey dinner—the convention listened with keen attention. But a comical look of surprise and dismay spread from face to face as she continued:

"And we who have gathered here to discuss means for the uplift of our sex, and through us of the whole human race, must not blind ourselves to the fact that we are permitting humanity to deteriorate. We have only to walk along Fifth Avenue in New York or Bellevue Avenue in Newport to realize that our species is fast hurrying toward degeneracy. This is especially noticeable in the men, the women—thank Heaven!—having contrived to rise superior to the appalling conditions which confront them."

A round of applause fittingly expressed the convention's appreciation of this tribute to their sex, and the speaker, warming to her work, went on to say that the remedy lay in the hands of women themselves. All they had to do was to select for their daughters husbands who were fitted not only intellectually, but morally and physically as well, to become the fathers of a new and more robust and god-like generation. Careful scientific breeding had improved horses, dogs, and even feathered fowl; then why should it fail to develop the human race along the noble lines intended by God?

The enthusiasm awakened by the enunciation of

these and other like platitudes manifested itself in an outburst of applause so loud and insistent that even Kate was impressed by it. Moreover, her news sense told her that Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's speech was the thing to be dwelt upon—"played up" is the technical term—in her account of the convention. That the appearance on the platform of the famous society leader was the chief event of the convention was quite evident, and she quickly made up her mind to ask her permission to telegraph the speech in full to the *Megaphone*.

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, when Kate modestly asked for a copy of the speech, "I'm only too happy to oblige you in any way that I can. Do come up to my rooms and have a cup of tea, and I'll tell you how it was that I came to make that little speech." And, with her hand resting affectionately on the other's shoulder, the leader of intellectual fashion led the way to her luxurious apartment on one of the upper floors of the hotel. All eyes were fixed upon the pair as they walked thus through the vast ball-room, the young newspaper woman embarrassed and blushing, her companion as serene as if their progress were along a quiet country lane instead of between those awful double rows of gimlet eyes and strained faces.

Mrs. Chilton-Smythe had brought two maids and a man-servant from her Fifth Avenue home—a fact of which her visitor instantly made mental note—and it was the footman who, at a word from his mistress, served the tea and cakes at a small table by a window overlooking a smoky, cañon-like street. Never had Kate Craven been more courteously entertained; never had she been brought into such

intimate companionship with a *grande dame* such as her hostess of the moment. The thought that such an exalted being should have chosen to show so much kindness to one as unimportant and undeserving as herself almost brought the tears to her eyes, and she resolved that if the chance ever were hers she would show her gratitude. It was therefore with the memory of this kindness warm in her heart that she entered her room to write her account of the convention—an account in which Mrs. Chilton-Smythe figured to the exclusion of other women of far greater earnestness and intelligence. It was printed on the front page of the paper under a sprawling caption calling attention to the "revolutionary ideas" that had "thrilled the convention," and was supplemented by a short editorial in which the speaker was called the "Joan of Arc of the new woman's movement."

Not only in the metropolis, but in every city of the Union as well, did a liberal and discerning press hail Mrs. Chilton-Smythe as the leader of her sex. Sensible enough to know when to hold her tongue, she made no more speeches, but remained a quiet but by far the most conspicuous figure in Chicago until the convention adjourned and the members dispersed to their several homes, rejoicing in the thought that the Woman's Betterment cause had made a noteworthy advancement. Mrs. Chilton-Smythe disappeared from the scene in a cloud of glory, having achieved at the very last a sartorial triumph that was destined to outlive in the public memory her remarkable utterances on the upbuilding of the human race. The hat in which she made her almost sensational departure from the hotel was

of novel and striking design, and one so easily imitated that within a fortnight a score of Chicago milliners were turning it out in cheaper materials, and before the close of the season the "Chilton-Smythe toque" was a recognized form of head-gear from one end of the country to the other.

CHAPTER XV

KATE CRAVEN returned to New York feeling that in Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, whose name was now on every feminine tongue, she had made a firm friend for life. She had also won the undying gratitude of Mrs. Whittlebeck, who followed her with slavish adoration to the train, begging her to visit her in Omaha and assuring her that the next time she went to New York she would call upon her.

She reached home to find Lady Clara affectionately glad to see her, but evidently agitated, and it was not long before she told the cause of her anxiety. Barshfield was about to take one of his periodical trips abroad. Tops had seen the steamer ticket lying on the royal desk, and had hastened to carry the tidings to those whose favor he especially coveted.

"But what difference can that make to us? He never comes near our office!" exclaimed Kate, surprised that such a trivial happening should seem to Lady Clara of such serious import.

"My dear," said the elder and more experienced woman, "when you've been in Park Row a little longer you'll know that a trip to Europe is apt to prove a sad affair to some of those not able to take it. All the dirty work in the office is done while Mr. Barshfield is away. That's the time you're liable to be discharged without rhyme or reason, or else taken off a desk where you've made good and put on one

where they know you'll fall down. Whether he gives instructions himself before he goes, nobody can say, but while he's away Macy and Vanderlip have full power. They're all on the anxious seat in the city-room, and though I've no reason to believe that anything is going to happen to us, still I can't help feeling worried. At my age, and with all the calls on my purse, it would be a very serious thing for me to lose my job, especially as I haven't got more than twenty dollars to my name, and I owe all of that and more, too."

Poor Lady Clara's voice broke into something very like a sob at the last, and that, with the two big tears that rolled down her cheeks, touched Kate's kind heart. Deeply grateful as she was to the elder woman for all she had done to make smooth the rough and treacherous paths of Park Row for her untried feet, there had been times when the heedless generosity of that estimable and sincere friend had aroused her indignation. Time and again had she remonstrated with her, but to no avail. Now the sight of this weary, worried woman clothed in a gorgeous scarlet kimono, her iron-gray hair straggling down her back, her eyes dim with tears, and her whole face distorted with anxiety, moved her to plain speech.

"You poor dear thing," she said, putting her arms tenderly around the scarlet-clad figure, "don't you know that if you allow every one to sponge on you you'll never have a cent of your own?"

"But how can I help it?" wailed Lady Clara. "Surely it ought to be give-and-take in this world, and when every one is so good and kind to me it's only right that I should help along as much as

possible. Then I've got calls on me that you don't know about—calls that no mother could disregard. Wait till you're a mother, dear, and then you'll understand as you can't now."

"But I do understand!" exclaimed Kate, indignantly. "I've known all along that your worthless son was keeping you poor with his incessant demands upon you. I've seen him in company with that wretched woman, dressed in clothes that you paid for, eating and drinking and laughing and making love to her as if he hadn't a care on his mind. Well, I suppose he hasn't. He puts them all on your shoulders."

"So somebody's been talking to you about my poor boy?" moaned Lady Clara, forlornly. "Whoever did it might have been better employed, I can tell you that. Who was it?"

"No matter who it was," retorted Kate. "The fact remains that he's taking your money and spending it on a vile woman. I wonder that even *she* isn't ashamed to take it."

"Well, at least he loves her, and they're happy together. There's something in that, isn't there?" whimpered Lady Clara, giving way without reserve to her grief. "And what's more, I can't forget that he's my own son. I suppose you've never taken that into account?"

"That makes it all the worse!" rejoined the other, sharply. "It's bad enough for him to allow that infamous creature to pay his bills, but to come to his own mother is simply shameless. Now, I've got a little money saved up, and back of that money is a very grateful heart, so you needn't feel ashamed to call on me for help when you want it. But let

me tell you that not one cent of it shall go into the pockets of any of the dead-beats who've been fattening on you ever since you've been earning a salary."

Wisely enough Kate said no more, and Lady Clara, who had grown extremely fond of her during the many months of their intimate association in home and office, did her best to forgive her for telling her the truth—a sin that many excellent women find it hard to pardon.

Generously enough the elder woman then proceeded to tell her assistant that her reports of the convention were highly regarded by those in authority in the office, and had even evoked favorable comment from the royal lips. The fact that she had not only telegraphed the now famous Chilton-Smythe oration in full, but had also made known to a feverishly interested world the fact that that famous woman traveled with two maids and a man-servant, had proved her a journalist of powers hitherto unsuspected, and Lady Clara declared that it was not unlikely that she would now be "pushed right along," adding, dolefully, but not enviously, "especially if *I* get fired."

"Nonsense!" cried the other, impetuously; "all I know is what you've taught me. I'm much more anxious about my own job than about yours."

Kate had done admirable work at the woman's convention, and had also obtained from Mrs. Chilton-Smythe a great deal of personal information, for the most part trivial and therefore important, together with permission to use it as she might see fit. This material she wove into an interview which was printed on the Woman's Page, together with a snap-

shot of the toque that was soon to win immortal fame.

Barshfield sailed for Europe the next morning, and, true to Lady Clara's prediction, he had scarcely passed Sandy Hook when the ax began to fall in the city-room. Not one of those mentioned in these chronicles suffered. A few pawns were swept from the board—and then silence. The city-room began to breathe freely again, and the survivors, feeling that at least the inevitable day of doom was postponed, took up once more the dull burden of duty.

A fortnight later Marshall, having received an offer to become the Sunday editor of the *Daily Planet*, cabled his resignation to Barshfield. A few days afterward Vanderlip came into Macy's room and, having carefully closed the door behind him, placed on the latter's desk a cablegram in which Barshfield gave Penfield full charge of the Sunday supplement, making him fully responsible for it, and taking that important department entirely out of the hands of Vanderlip, who had previously maintained a careful supervision over its contents. Macy read it with slow deliberation, and then the eyes of the two men met, and for the first time since they were reporters together they found themselves in perfect accord and animated by a common purpose.

"I think, John," said Vanderlip, "that it's about time for us to get together."

"Quite time, Tom," said Macy. They were calling each other by their first names, as they had when they were in the city-room. "Come up and have dinner with me to-night," he added; and then Tops came in with a card, and Vanderlip withdrew to his own quarters, turning as he went to address

the other in the form of stiff politeness to which the office-boy was accustomed.

It was late that night when the two men arrived at the office by different routes, and nothing could have been more friendly than the manner in which Vanderlip apprised Penfield of his good fortune, thanking him jovially for taking some of the load from his own shoulders.

"If I were you," he advised, "I'd drive the men out of that little corner office and fix it up for myself. You've got to have a place where you can receive people and talk business without having the whole staff listen."

Greatly elated at the prospect of having a whole room to himself, Penfield hastened to drive out the previous incumbents, thereby creating three vengeful enemies, which was precisely the effect that the managing editor had calculated on. He was not long in making known to Kate the fact of his promotion, and in his usual boastful way he remarked that he stood so well with Barshfield now that nothing could come between them.

But the young girl's common sense told her that his place was less secure than he fancied, and she warned him not to imperil his chances by overconfidence in his own impregnability.

Penfield only laughed at her safe counsel. "I guess if you could see how polite Vanderlip is to me you'd realize that I've climbed pretty high up the steps of the throne. It was he who suggested my taking that little office for myself."

For a time both Macy and Vanderlip offered him bits of advice and many suggestions as to the conduct of the Sunday supplement, all of which he

acted upon without dreaming of the pit that they were digging before his feet. Then there appeared in a gossipy weekly, that published occasional rasping items of Park Row news, a paragraph stating that it was well known in newspaper circles that Edward Penfield, although nominally Sunday editor of the *Megaphone*, was in reality merely the subordinate of Vanderlip, who supervised everything under direct instructions from the proprietor. From that moment Penfield steered his own course, ignoring all advice and keeping aloof from the two men whose suggestions had proved so valuable to him. Now, instead of consulting those experienced editors, both of whom were altogether too crafty to give him any wrong hints, he looked over the files of the *Megaphone* and other papers, for he had long since discovered that Park Row is a favorite field for the exercise of the prudent qualities of imitation and repetition.

His new policy bore its first fruit in February, in the shape of a "Lincoln Number," which was followed a few weeks later by a great colored picture of crowded Fifth Avenue called "The Easter Parade." He was just beginning to plan a "Christmas in Many Lands" for the first week in December when the rising thermometer warned him of the approach of summer, a period in which it was customary for the *Megaphone* to call attention to the "starving millions" of the city's population. A picnic for the children of the tenements seemed to him the medium of beneficence most honored by ancient custom, as well as the least expensive, and he determined to organize one of mammoth proportions. The task of collecting the children and con-

veying them to the seashore was assigned to Lady Clara, while Kate was told to go with a photographer through the east side of the town and prepare a graphic description of life in that teeming quarter. Meanwhile ambassadors from the business office went forth to make thrifty bargains for transportation to the seashore, for ice-cream, cakes, lemonade—anything, in short, that could be made to serve as refreshments for a company of hungry boys and girls.

The readers of the *Megaphone* were informed through a series of trumpet-blasts on the editorial page that the entire cost of this enormous undertaking was to be borne by the humane owner of the paper; but the actual expense in money was surprisingly small. The business office agreed through its emissaries to publish the portrait of the superintendent of the steamboat company, together with a eulogy of his benevolence, in exchange for free transportation. The ice-cream manufacturer was to furnish a specified number of gallons of cream in return for which the portrait of his daughter was to be published in the society column, together with a paragraph describing her as "one of the most popular of the season's débutantes." The sandwiches, milk, and candy were arranged for on similar terms, and but little remained for Lady Clara to do but secure the attendance of a suitable number of children and get some photographs of the worst-looking ones. This had to be done before the excursion, because the parents usually insisted upon making them as presentable as possible for the trip, in spite of the remonstrances of Lady Clara, who wanted them ragged and starving so that they

could be photographed in a state of destitution and thus help to keep alive one of the most treasured of the many myths on which the *Megaphone's* circulation thrived.

So it happened that on the appointed day this indefatigable woman might have been seen in one of the dirtiest blocks in the worst quarter of the town, posing a group of street children in front of the camera that had been hastily erected on the sidewalk. Having a keen eye for the picturesque, she arranged her little group directly in front of a particularly squalid-looking wooden building, in the doorway of which a drunken woman of repulsive aspect stood watching the proceedings with polite interest. The children were selected because of their rags and dirt. Those who had shoes and stockings were told to take them off, and at the suggestion of the photographer Lady Clara artfully rubbed a little dirt on the cheeks of the cleanest ones.

"Now, children," she commanded, as she waved back the swarms of urchins that had assembled to watch the proceedings, "stay perfectly quiet for a minute, and I'll give each one of you a penny."

"Mebbe ye'd like to have me move out of the way, lady," said the drunken woman in the doorway, with a courteous hiccough.

"Not on any account!" exclaimed Lady Clara. "Please stay just where you are, and don't try to smooth out your hair. There, let that lock hang over your face; it looks better that way."

"I'll go in an' put on me shoes an' stockin's," remonstrated the woman, glancing down at her bare feet.

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Lady Clara.

"And don't try to hide them one behind the other. Just keep quiet one minute, madam, and then I'll invite you to have a nice glass of gin."

"Very well, dear," said the woman. "When a rale lady asks me to do a thing, gentle like, the same as yerself, I always try to do it."

"There, there, don't talk! Now, then, all quiet for one minute," said Lady Clara. The photographer lifted the cloth from his camera and the work was done.

"That 'll make a splendid group," he remarked to Lady Clara. "They look too clean on the excursion. This is the raggedest crowd we ever struck."

"Yes," said Lady Clara, as she handed the drunken woman a dime. "I do wish they weren't so outrageously neat and clean when they come to our charities. We'll call this picture 'A mother and her brood,' and then we'll try and find some drunken man asleep on a bench and photograph him for the father. Children," she continued, as she distributed her pennies among the young models, "do any of you happen to know where there's a nice drunken man asleep?"

"Dere's one on a bench in Mulberry Park," said one urchin.

"Me fadder's layin' in a doorway round de corner," piped up a small girl.

"Better try the one in the park," said the photographer, shouldering his tripod; "we'll probably get a better exposure there." And they walked on to complete their work, while the old woman made her way through the side-door of a near-by groggery, and the children followed them in a vast, ever-increasing army.

CHAPTER XVI

MEANWHILE Kate Craven was making her way to a part of the city that she had never dared to visit, owing to the awful descriptions she had read of it in *Sunday Megaphone* literature. In her mirage the East Side was a region of bitter poverty and wretchedness, inhabited only by ragged and hungry thousands. Swarming about the doors of groggeries were countless men, women, and even children in various stages of intoxication. Sick babies, abandoned by drunken mothers, lay gasping in doorways. Everywhere people were crying for food. And all this time men and women of wealth and high social position were heartlessly eating and drinking and enjoying themselves. That was the sort of fiction on which the *Megaphone* thrived.

The photographer who accompanied her was a recent addition to the art department who knew nothing of the traditions of the paper nor of the inexorable laws laid down by its owner. Moreover, he was a young man with an artistic soul that soared far above photography, which was to him a mere means of livelihood until that ardently longed-for moment when he should "arrive" as a painter of realism. By nature a lover of truth and possessed of a clear vision, he delighted in portraying, even through the ruthless mechanical medium of the camera, life as it really was rather than as the public

expected it to be. The two had not proceeded far before he realized that in his companion he had found a congenial spirit, a lover of the truth like himself, though still viewing life through the jaundiced spectacles of sensational journalism.

Journeying up the Bowery in a street-car, they alighted at Fourth Street and turned their steps eastward. It was a clear, sunny day, and as they entered the poorer quarter of the city Kate was amazed to note the unmistakable signs of cheerfulness and comfort that greeted her on every hand. Swarms of children, for the most part dirty but obviously healthy and vigorous, were playing in the streets; peddlers' carts filled with every conceivable kind of merchandise were ranged along the sidewalk and did a thriving business at prices that seemed to Kate amazingly small. She noticed also that the customers paid cash for what they bought. Nowhere could she find any indications of gaunt poverty and starvation. A few blocks farther south they found the Italians celebrating one of their innumerable feast-days, the whole block gay with cheap decorations, the houses festooned with gaudy fabrics, and the roadway crowded with a merry, chattering throng. Farther north in Tompkins Square were thousands of children at play, and a happier-looking lot of youngsters it would be hard to find anywhere. Although the day was warm, very few were barefoot, and, indeed, scarcely one was not comfortably clad. So far as externals could indicate, their lot was far more to be envied than that of the children of the Graytown factory-workers. She was surprised also to see that the city had recognized their need for outdoor recreation by supplying the great open

square with swings, sand-heaps, and other means of enjoyment, such as were unheard of in her old home.

"I've an idea!" she exclaimed. "Let us take some pictures of these youngsters at play and describe them just as they are; show how much is done for them, and explain how they are really better off than if they lived in a small town like the one I came from."

"That's right!" said the photographer, approvingly, for he knew nothing of the most sacred traditions of the *Megaphone* office. "I've been in London and Liverpool and seen what real bitter, starving, hopeless poverty is. It's a thing you're not likely to forget, and there's nothing like it in this town."

Filled with honest zeal for a genuine chronicle of truth, the two set to work, and the result was a page article, illustrated with many photographs, in which the poor of New York were contrasted with those of the British capital and the mill-workers in the average small American town. It was late at night when the page was finally made up, and Kate went home feeling that she had done a really illuminating piece of work and one that would fully justify the confidence Ned Penfield had always reposed in her. The latter, in the press of business incidental to getting the Sunday edition to press, scarcely glanced at Kate's page, and accepted her assurances that she had written a story that she felt sure would do them both credit. In doing this she had been compelled to leave out a picture of Mrs. Chilton-Smythe that she had promised to publish.

Although Vanderlip had in his own words "washed his hands" of all responsibility for the Sunday

supplement, he never failed to have a set of page proofs placed on his desk on Saturday morning, and so it came to pass that at noon on this day his confidential emissary, Tops, dove down into the press-room and returned with a complete set hidden under his coat. Precisely two minutes later the managing editor entered the private office of Mr. Macy, and, having first satisfied himself that they were alone, drew from his pocket a proof of Kate's description of slum life and spread it out on the city editor's desk. The latter glanced at the pictures of happy, robust youngsters at play—the photographer had selected the best instead of the worst looking groups he could find—and then the eyes of the two men met, a gleam of triumph on the face of each.

"Give a calf rope enough, and he'll be sure to hang himself!" said Vanderlip, significantly.

It is doubtful if, even if Kate's page had been shown him, Penfield would have quite realized the enormity of her offense in permitting the photographs of fat, healthy, decently dressed children to appear in a story of the tenements.

For in the pages of the Sunday *Megaphone* only the extremes of human existence are visible—the very rich and the very poor. And, as the wealth of the members of the Four Hundred, the brilliancy of its women, the enormous cost of their dresses, the staggering weight of their tiaras, and the eccentricity of their revels are all skilfully magnified, so are the sufferings of the "starving millions" made as prominent as possible. To sustain the stability of this illusion it is necessary to people the town with what might be termed the "professional poor"—

meaning those who are always pictured as gaunt, hollow-eyed victims of capitalistic tyranny. The admission, therefore, to the columns of the *Megaphone* of a true picture of the city's poorer quarter meant a step toward the disintegration of this delirious picture that had been constructed with so much care and craft. At noon on Sunday Dan Farley, than whom no man was ever better versed in the traditions and myths and the laws, written and unwritten, by which the office was governed, entered the city-room and with a look of questioning wonder in his face showed the supplement to one of the younger reporters and asked him if he knew what it meant.

"Bedad," said Farley, as the other gazed blankly at him with a shake of the head, "the next thing you know they'll be showing up millionaires as if they were ordinary human beings instead of crowned kings. You mark my words, me boy, some poor devil is going to get in trouble for that, and you can bet that Mr. Sunday Editor won't be man enough to take the thing on his own shoulders."

"But what's the matter with it?" asked the other, his face showing plainly his bewilderment.

"Matter!" cried Dan. "Why, there's a lot of fat kids got into the pictures. That's something you never saw yet in our paper, though the Lord knows they've had everything else under the sun."

Kate's page of description proved one of the minor sensations of Park Row, and for a whole day she nursed the comforting delusion that she had done something that would redound to her credit. Then the storm began to break about her in the shape of a succession of startling thunderclaps.

The first of these came on Sunday morning while she and Lady Clara were seated before the gas-log in their little parlor, Kate with her writing-pad on her knees and the older woman, who had remained in bed until late, idly scanning the pages of the huge Sunday issue.

"I don't see Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's picture," she remarked. "You know she'll make an awful row if it's left out."

"I couldn't help it," rejoined Kate; "the East Side story needed a full page, and the pictures were so fine and took up so much room I hadn't the heart to leave any of them out. Just see how good they are."

Lady Clara studied the page a moment and then cried: "Oh, my dear! How did you ever come to do it? If your friend Penfield passed on those it will get him into a peck of trouble, and you'll certainly be called down. Oh, why didn't you tell me what you were doing?"

"Why, what's wrong with them?" demanded the other, in amazement. "They were the best-looking children we could find."

"The best-looking!" exclaimed Lady Clara; "that's precisely what's the matter with them. Don't you know that we've got to make the poor all the poorer and the rich all the richer in our office? I don't know what Mr. Vanderlip will say. I'm sure Mr. Barshfield will be furious when he sees it. How in the world do you think we could get up a bread fund for people who have enough to eat?"

The second thunderclap came that very moment in the form of a telephone call from Penfield, whose attention had just been drawn by Vanderlip to

Kate's *faux pas*, and who now addressed her over the wire as he had never spoken to her before. In a voice vibrant with anger he accused her of combining with his enemies to ruin him, and declared that if he lost his position on the *Megaphone* it would be entirely her fault. Then with a few bitter words about ingratitude he rang off, leaving Kate white, trembling, and speechless.

"What's the matter?" demanded Lady Clara, as the young girl threw herself into her easy-chair and covered her face with her hands. Kate's only reply was a burst of tears; and Lady Clara wept sympathetically, too, as she took her in her arms and held her close to her breast until the paroxysm of grief had subsided.

"It was Ned," she said, as soon as she was able to speak. "He told me I'd done it on purpose so as to get him discharged, and he called me ungrateful, too. Oh, it's all some dreadful mistake—and I thought I was doing so splendidly."

The elder woman comforted her as best she could, and assured her that the whole thing would probably blow over and then Penfield would realize how unjust he had been and hasten to apologize; but Kate's feelings had been grievously hurt, and despite Lady Clara's kind ministrations she had little sleep that night, and when she awoke in the morning she found herself crushed under the weight of an awful anxiety.

The next thunderclap came when she reached the office and found awaiting her a summons from Macy, who, with a serious face, asked her how it was that she had neglected to print Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's portrait with an account of what the Woman's Betterment Society was doing.

"She writes me rather bitterly on the subject," continued the city editor, glancing at the letter in his hand. "She says you promised her it should go in, and she relied on your promise. Instead of that you ran the picture of Miss Smithers, who is, as you probably know, her mortal enemy, and she's wild about it. How did it happen, Miss Craven?"

"I didn't know that it was so very important," she answered, desperately. "The account of the East Side with the pictures took up so much room that the picture of Mrs. Chilton-Smythe got crowded out. But I'll have it in next Sunday, sure," she added, in the forlorn hope of retrieving herself.

"I'm afraid that East Side page was another mistake," said Macy, regretfully. "Mr. Penfield tells me he cautioned you particularly about the policy of the office in regard to its attitude toward the slums. Surely you have read our editorials regarding the deplorable condition of these victims of capitalistic tyranny, and you know that we're always getting up picnics and free excursions for them and making appeals to the public in their behalf. How can we hope to interest people in such fat, healthy-looking children as those depicted on your page? Your own common sense, to say nothing of the experience you have gained in the office, ought to have taught you not to print such a story as that, especially after Mr. Penfield's explicit instructions."

"But he—" began Kate, and then stopped short. She knew now that Ned, instead of taking the blame, had lied to save himself; but she could not bring herself to betray him. Better to suffer ignominy and perhaps lose her position than to put her friend in jeopardy. And besides, it might be that she had

done him an injustice, and that Macy was trying to coax some admission from her. Ever since the night of her arrival in New York she had been hearing of the craft and guile with which men played the game of office politics. This might be a specimen of it. Macy handed her Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's letter, and she read it with feelings of amazement and indignation. The leader of the Woman's Betterment Society had written with the unbridled fury of a fishwoman. She alluded to the ingratitude of that "chit of a girl" whom, she declared, had received from her "countless favors and gifts"—meaning thereby her signed photographs, one or two bunches of flowers, and on one memorable occasion a last season's hat—all of which now rose up in Kate's memory and confronted her like avenging furies. To her letter was added a postcript in which she declared that she had written to Mr. Barshfield in Europe, asking that Miss Craven be discharged from the paper for not giving an equivalent for the favors she had received.

Kate's face was white as she silently returned the letter to Macy. The little world of friends that she had built up for herself in her own corner of New York seemed tumbling down about her ears. Amazed and hurt, she made no attempt to justify herself. If she could only hold herself in control and keep back the tears it was all she could hope for.

"I am sorry, Miss Craven," said Macy, gently, "that all of this happened, especially as Mr. Barshfield is away, and it is difficult to lay the matter before him as I should like to. As it is, he will probably be very much influenced by what Mr. Penfield says, so I advise you to see *him* at the very earliest possible moment."

The young girl turned away and with some difficulty managed to gain her office before she relieved herself by a burst of tears.

Penfield wrote promptly to Barshfield, explaining that he had given full instructions to his assistant in regard to the well-known attitude of the paper toward the slums, and hinting that jealousy of his own success had, quite naturally, developed in the office a little cabal that would not permit even the interests of the paper to interfere with his own undoing.

The ten days that followed were the most wretched that Kate had ever known. How she managed to do her work and preserve the outward semblance of cheerfulness she never knew. But Lady Clara did her best to cheer her up with the love and sympathy that always flowed from her foolish heart when a friend was in trouble, and it seemed to Kate that every one in the office was unusually cordial and gentle, none more so than Telford, who showed her countless little attentions in his unobtrusive way. Penfield she studiously avoided, and once, when he tried to speak to her, she passed him by without a sign of recognition. The rumor of her *faux pas* had gone abroad through the city-room, whence it had quickly sped, by way of that unequaled distributing agency of gossip, the Brasserie of Hard Times, throughout the length and breadth of Park Row; and those who knew the merciless will that lay behind Barshfield's gentle manner and well-bred smile feared that disaster was hanging over her head, though they hoped that the swinging ax might fall on the responsible Sunday editor instead of on her.

When Barshfield received Penfield's letter of ex-

planation and Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's angry complaint, he realized that something must be done, and promptly cabled to Vanderlip for full particulars of the outrage on office traditions. The latter, replying through the same channel of communication, sought to excuse Kate on the ground of inexperience, and explained that he had just learned that she and Penfield came from the same country town and were close friends. This was news to the *Megaphone's* owner and awakened in his mind a suspicion of intrigue going on behind his back, for although, as he remembered now, he had often spoken of Kate to Penfield, the latter had never acknowledged her as an intimate friend.

It was this paragraph that marked out a course of action for which Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's letter furnished the excuse. Some one must go, and Penfield was too valuable a man at this particular juncture to be dispensed with. Kate, on the other hand, was merely a pawn on the board. On her innocent head the royal vengeance must fall.

Kate Craven listened to her sentence, pronounced by Vanderlip in tones of real regret and sympathy, then went back to her desk, packed up her few personal belongings, and slipped away without saying a word to any one. As she entered the parlor of her home and threw her little bundle on the table Lady Clara knew what had happened and rose from her chair with a cry of grief and sympathy that brought tears to the young girl's eyes.

"You needn't tell me, darling," moaned the elder woman; "I was afraid of it from the first."

In the course of her hazardous life Lady Clara had experienced so many ups and downs, had lost so

many jobs, retrieved herself so often, and suffered so much at the hands of the ungrateful and self-seeking that she had long since learned to accept disaster as a mere episode of a precarious existence. But she was one of those rare human beings who, although quite able to bear their own misfortunes without complaint, cannot look unmoved at the sufferings of others, and now the sight of Kate's white, pitiful face literally wrung her heart with grief. For almost the first time in her life she had loved some one who was not entirely worthless. The months during which she and Kate had shared the little flat had been the happiest and most peaceful in all her life, and at this moment she felt that she would rather have lost her own position on the *Megaphone* than have had Kate sacrificed to the heartless ambition of the man whom she had trusted so implicitly. For Lady Clara had been an anxious though silent observer of the intimacy between Ned Penfield and the young girl whom she had taken into her warm, motherly heart, and she wondered now whether Kate were more seriously interested in him than she had imagined and hoped. But, wisely enough, she asked no questions, believing that if there were anything to tell Kate would confide in her in due season.

CHAPTER XVII

IN almost every human life there comes a time when it is absolutely necessary to sit down and think, to review the past and make plans for the future, to determine whether to yield to the stress of circumstances or renew the battle. To the courageous, ambitious soul this is a moment of intense thought, crowded with bitter memories and inspired by marvelous dreams as the soul clutches eagerly at the straws of desperate hope. In this moment, while the search-light of the imagination lights up with alternating rays the irrevocable past and the possible future, the scales of vanity and self-deception fall from our eyes and we see with a marvelously clear vision.

It is not success, but humiliating defeat that brings this moment of ruthless self-examination. It came to Robert Bruce as he lay hidden in his cave watching the spider and taking new heart from the infinite patience with which it spun its web. It was in a like moment that Hamlet decided between life and death. At such a crisis, lasting a hundred days as befitted the magnitude of the matters involved, Napoleon devised his escape from Elba and planned the Waterloo campaign. It was in a moment that was doubtless shorter but no less bitter that Carlyle resolved to rewrite the *French Revolution* after his first manuscript had been accidentally de-

stroyed. And it was in just such a moment, late that night, after Lady Clara had gone to bed, that Kate Craven sat down before the gas-log in the little parlor, her eyes dry, her face distorted with pain, and her heart filled with a bitterness such as it had never known before, and looked the future fairly in the face. At the same time she reviewed her whole career, acknowledging the errors that had caused her downfall and studying the difficulties that surrounded her.

Sitting there with her feet on the fender and her head resting on her hands, the whole scheme of New York life—or at least those phases of it that she had known—stood out, revealed in vivid distinctness, stripped of all glamour. She remembered now, with a smile of contempt, the enthusiasm with which she had entered upon her work in the hen-coop, the hopes that she had cherished of bettering the condition of her sex, her simple-minded faith in the Woman's Betterment Society, its sincerity, disinterestedness, and power of accomplishment. How much, she asked herself, does woman want to be bettered? In the old Graytown days she had dreamed of women as a great power for good, ruling men by sheer force of mind and soul; but it seemed to her now that if they ruled at all it was not by either soul or mind, and that their influence was not for good, but for evil. She went back in memory to the evening she spent with Telford at the theater and in the garish Broadway restaurant—an experience that marked a distinct period in her initiation into metropolitan ways; the women in short skirts and low-cut bodices who sang and danced; those in tights who were there merely to charm the eye; and, more instructive than all the

rest, the splendidly attired creatures in the restaurant on whom the men were spending their money so lavishly. Ever since the whole situation had been delicately made known to her she had found it difficult to believe that it was through the mind and soul that her sex acquired its influence. Now it seemed to her that Truth was literally staring her out of countenance and announcing that it had come into her mind to stay.

And of all the bitter truths that dogged her mental footsteps none was more malignant nor insistent than the Ned Penfield whom she saw now with the halo gone from his brow and his mean little soul standing out before her gaze in all its sliminess. She tried to drive the hideous vision from her mind, but Truth reminded her that this Penfield was the real man that he had always been and always would be; that the soul that she saw in all its shameful nakedness was the same one that her wise old mother had recognized from the very first and had warned her against.

Her mother! There was a woman who dominated by force of soul and mind! Never before had she seemed so strong and wise and good. Kate Craven's face softened and her eyes filled with tears as she thought of the long years of loving self-sacrifice, hard work, and careful teaching to which she owed so much. It was a supreme consolation to her now to think of the money she had been able to send to her, and of what those small sums must have meant in increased comfort and lessened anxiety. She would give the world now to be able to lay her head on that broad bosom and sob out her troubles as she had in the old childhood days.

By a sudden and resolute effort of the will she roused herself from this train of morbid introspection. Brought face to face with the bitter actualities of life, she realized that the moment had come in which she must choose between the two paths that she saw before her. Either she must acknowledge defeat and return to the home which she had left so confidently a year ago, or else take up arms once more against the sea of trouble in which she had involved herself. One of these paths led through the quiet fields of dull respectability to uneventful old age. Guided by the lamp of her recent experience, she felt that this path she could at least travel with safety. The other led through unknown perils and anxieties into the heart of a battle for very existence that she regarded now with far more terror than she had felt when she first flung herself into the fray. One of these paths she would tread with her mother by her side; the other she must travel alone, for whom could she trust now? The one path led nowhere; the other almost anywhere.

The psychological moment in life that came to Napoleon at Elba, to Bruce in his cave, and to Carlyle before the ashes of his burnt manuscript had come to Kate Craven seated before the gas-log in a New York flat.

She had saved almost three hundred dollars from her salary, and she knew that her mother could live —or at least exist—without her aid. The temptation to stay in the city and fight it out was strong within her, especially when she thought of Graytown and the long, dreary vista of a life that she had completely outgrown. Wearied with her long day, she rose to her feet, extinguished the gas-log which had

given her both warmth and light, and was about to seek her own room when the telephone bell rang. It was Ernest Telford, and her face brightened as she recognized his voice. He had only just heard of her trouble, and wished to tell her how sorry he was. Could he call to-morrow and talk over things with her? Perhaps he might be able to suggest something? At any rate, he hoped so. Good night.

Kate's cheeks were slightly flushed as she entered her bedroom and turned on the electric light. She even found herself humming a gay air as she began to undress. Midway in her preparations for the night—to be exact, it was at the moment when she had taken off one stocking and was about to remove the other—her introspective mood returned, and, seated on the edge of her bed, with her head resting on her hands, she renewed the mental conflict that was to determine her future course. The Graytown path seemed as drab and as dreary as before, but its alternative had assumed a rosy hue that had been invisible to her earlier in the evening. She wondered why, during the half-hour that she had spent before the gas-log, she had not once thought of Ernest Telford. Now that she had listened to his voice over the telephone she could think of no one else. His few words of sympathy had touched her deeply, and now his friendship assumed an importance in her mind that she was at a loss to account for. Looking back to her earliest acquaintance with him, she could not recall the time when she had not found him deferential in his manner and sincere in his friendly regard. His way of looking at her had been different from that of the other men on the staff,

for while they had often made her blush with shame and indignation by furtively eying her, as if appraising her good points for some market of feminine flesh, he had always looked her straight in the eye and apparently taken cognizance of her face rather than of her figure. Surely here was one man who could be trusted, and she resolved to hear what he had to say before definitely making up her mind in regard to her future.

She was going to bed with a heart greatly lightened when a thought flashed across her mind that took the fine edge off her happiness. Why had Telford never noticed her figure? Was it because he did not find it beautiful? She jumped up and looked at herself in the glass. Surely he might have deigned to glance at it now and then. Was it because he was indifferent to feminine charms? If so, he was the only man in New York of whom that could be said. More likely that he was so much in love with some other woman that he could see no beauty in girls whom he merely knew casually in the office. It had been said in the hen-coop that his family was one of social prominence and that he himself was frequently bidden to the august revels of the Four Hundred. Then it must be some society woman who had enchained his fancy. And Kate went to rest wishing that she had not carried her speculations quite so far.

She had many things to attend to the next morning; but at ten o'clock she was dressed to receive her caller.

"Well!" cried Lady Clara, as Kate entered the parlor. "I never knew you to dress up like that in the middle of the day. You must be either going out to lunch or else expecting a visitor."

"How do I look?" inquired Kate, turning herself round for inspection.

"You never looked better!" exclaimed the older woman, forgetting her own troubles in her generous enthusiasm. "You certainly have a lovely figure, and that gown shows it off to perfection," she added, whereat the other smiled her satisfaction.

She had dressed herself with infinite care in a closely fitting frock of white duck, whose stiffly starched skirts gave forth an agreeable rustling sound as she walked. A single deep red rose thrust into her bosom harmonized with the rich coloring of her face and invited attention to the exquisitely rounded bust on which it reposed. Lady Clara, who, like most fashion-writers, was the worst-dressed of women, was also an excellent judge of costume in others. She cast a critical eye over her from the crown of her glossy head to the tips of her white, low-cut shoes and smiled approvingly. Kate lifted her rustling skirts so as to display the stockings of white silk drawn tightly over her slender ankles.

"I always regarded you as a girl who didn't know her own good points," said Lady Clara, "but I see now that I was mistaken. And I imagined that you were indifferent to all men except Penfield. Now, you never got yourself up like that to please a woman, so I'm convinced that you've had some other man up your sleeve all the time. Whoever he is, I hope he'll treat you better than the other did. He certainly couldn't treat you any worse. Here he comes now!" she exclaimed, excitedly, as the telephone bell rang and Kate hurried to answer it.

"Tell him to come right up," Lady Clara heard her say, and then Kate re-entered the parlor and

threw herself into an easy-chair. "I want you to watch this man," she said, "and see if he pays the slightest attention to me or seems to notice that I have put on my very best clothes for his especial benefit. If he doesn't, it's the last time I'll take the trouble to look nice for him or for any man."

But for once Telford appeared to take notice. For the first time in all her acquaintance with him his eye rested with interest and approval on the outlines of her graceful, rounded figure; for the first time she saw something that was more than mere admiration kindle in his face as he noted—or seemed to note—the rich color in her cheeks that matched the deep red rose at her breast. For once this quiet, self-contained man had been brought down from the lofty heights of polite indifference and forced to acknowledge that she had qualities that entitled her to recognition, especially when she had taken pains to show them to the best advantage.

"I came here to condole with you over your ill fortune," said Telford, his eyes still shining their approval; "but it seems more appropriate to compliment you on your good looks. A girl who looks as well and dresses as well as you will have no trouble in getting along in New York. Meantime," he added, handing her an unsealed note, "my mother hopes that you will do us the honor of dining with us on Saturday, which is, as you know, my night off."

Kate was deeply moved and surprised, for Telford had no intimates in the office, and his home life was a mystery to the gossips of the hen-coop. She accepted the invitation with frank expressions of pleasure, and after he had gone she made up her mind to stay in New York and fight it out. His genuine

kindness touched her deeply and gave her the feeling that she had one friend on whom she could rely. She also rejoiced in the knowledge that for once he had found her attractive.

Mrs. Grimmond, who had been a witness to his greeting and had then tactfully withdrawn to her own room, did not hesitate to free her mind after Telford's departure. "My dear, I understand now why you took so much pains with yourself to-day. It was worth while, too, for his eyes showed what he thought as plainly as if it was written in big letters across his forehead. It's a pity he's poor, for he's just one of the nicest men in all the newspaper business." And to Lady Clara that meant the whole world—or at least that part of it to which Kate might reasonably aspire.

"You're always building romances," said Kate, coloring slightly.

"Did you ever know a decent woman who didn't?" inquired the other. "Well, I only hope something will come of it, for I can't bear to think of you trying to get along here all by yourself. You're altogether too good-looking for your own safety!"

"Nevertheless, I'm going to try it," said the younger woman, with the cheeriest smile that had appeared on her face since what she called her *débâcle*.

Directly after luncheon Lady Clara went out, and Kate seated herself in the easy-chair and renewed her meditations of the night before. She found herself now in a quite different mood. The future was not entirely obscured by clouds, and her vision seemed clearer, for she could discern in the not too remote distance something that looked like a suc-

cessful solution of the problem of existence. And, that solved, a career of real usefulness was more than a possibility. The past was clearer, too, so clear that she could see her mistakes and profit by them. And, looking back through wide-open eyes, she realized the important part that self-deception had played in bringing about her downfall. She had begun by deceiving herself in regard to Penfield, and it was on that sure foundation of disaster, self-humbugging, that her mistakes rested. And Lady Clara's case was even more hopeless than hers, because she was still absolutely unable to see her danger.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEAT maid-servant admitted Kate to the hallway of the Telfords' apartment, helped her to remove her wraps, and then opened the door leading into the little parlor. Telford, who had been standing with his back to the wood-fire, came forward with outstretched hand to welcome her, and then presented her to his mother, who rose from her easy-chair to give her a cordial, smiling greeting. It was the first time that Kate had ever seen the rewrite-man in evening dress, and the thought crossed her mind that she had never realized before how much distinction he possessed. It was gratifying to think that he had thus adorned himself in her honor.

The room was furnished in old mahogany that recalled to her mind the few fine pieces in her mother's home. It was not overcrowded with useless articles of adornment, nor were there many pictures on the walls. There was not a single signed theatrical photograph or framed newspaper cartoon to be seen anywhere; and it occurred to her that either of those interesting souvenirs of artistic life would have been sadly out of place.

Her quick eye had taken in these details while Telford was drawing up an arm-chair before the fire with an even greater deference of manner than he usually showed her. She noticed also two or three well-filled bookcases ranged against the walls and

a dozen or more new volumes lying on the center-table. *Nothing to Wear* and the *Sparrowgrass Papers* stamped the little library with the seal of an elder generation of New-Yorkers. For the first time since arriving in New York she found herself in a house in which good breeding was not an art as yet undiscovered or else irretrievably lost.

The Telfords lived in an inexpensive flat in a cross-street that was thoroughly respectable but not fashionable. Knowing that their means were limited, Kate was surprised at the quiet elegance of their dining-room, with its fine old sideboard, its table of rich mahogany, with its highly polished silver and cut glass gleaming in the soft candle-light. There were mats on the table, for Mrs. Telford would not permit its beautiful surface to be hidden beneath a table-cloth. The tall candlesticks were of solid silver, exquisitely fashioned; two heavy decanters of cut glass containing wine or spirits added a note of cheering color. It was evident that the family must at some time have been well-to-do. Indeed, that fact had long since been made known to Kate by the gossipy Lady Clara.

It was apparent that the maid who had opened the door and who now waited at the table was their only servant; but, as the visitor noticed, no apology or explanations seemed necessary, even when some slight delay was occasioned by the performance of double duty.

Never in her life had Kate Craven found herself at such a table or in such company. The meal was simple but very well cooked, and when the visitor accepted a second helping of dessert Telford exclaimed:

"You've found a quick way to my mother's heart, Miss Craven. She made that pudding herself, and she's prouder of it than she is of me."

Soon after dinner Mrs. Telford withdrew to her own room, leaving her son and their guest sitting opposite to each other before the fire, the one puffing at his pipe, the other quietly watching the flames, with her chin resting on her hand, as was her habit when thinking. For almost the first time since the *débâcle* she felt at peace with herself and on terms of growing amiability with the world. Grateful for the contented silence that had fallen upon them, she remained for some moments without speaking.

"I thought I had learned something about New York," she said, at last, "but I never had any idea that there was such a home as this in it. It's in a way like my own home in the country, only ever so much finer and more beautiful. And somehow your mother makes me think of my mother, though she's not at all like her. And then you have such lovely pictures and such a number of good books—not mere novels, but books worth reading."

For a moment Telford continued to smoke in contemplative silence. Then he knocked the ashes from his pipe and said, in his low, well-bred voice:

"Where did you gain your first ideas of New York? From the Sunday *Megaphone?*"

"Yes, I rather think I did."

"And since you came here you've seen nothing that disabused your mind of those ideas—nothing that suggested to you that possibly those preconceived notions were erroneous?"

"Very little until lately," rejoined Kate, simply.

"What were your ideas of this town?" inquired Telford.

"Well, I imagined it a city of contrasts, composed almost entirely of the very rich and the very poor—the former living in the greatest luxury, the others hungry and out of work—"

"Yes, and a society of four hundred brilliant women and dashing club-men, and a bright bohemian circle where they drink wine out of actresses' slippers. My dear Miss Craven, all that is a mere mirage created largely by Mr. Barshfield for the benefit of his circulation; a mirage that is plainly visible from afar but dissolves into thin air as you draw near. So long as you were helping to create and sustain these illusions by your work on the Woman's Page it was better that you should believe in them, but now that you are out in the open, fighting for your very existence, you should have a clearer vision."

A remembrance of the glare she had seen in the sky from the car window as she first approached New York flashed across the girl's mind. "I wish you would tell me just what you mean," she said, very earnestly.

"I mean," said Telford, "that what you believed to be the real New York does not exist, except in the imaginations of the *Megaphone's* readers. There is no exclusive four hundred who dominate society; there are no brilliant women and club-men of the sort that you read about. The truth in regard to the starving millions on the East Side has already been made known to you in a painful but effective fashion. The sooner you rid your mind of all those other myths the better it will be for you."

"Do you mean to tell me that there are no brill-

iant women in society?" demanded Kate, in amazement.

"Show me one!" said Telford, quietly. "There are a few older women in the town to whom that term might be applied," he added, "but the brilliant young woman who can make or unmake an artistic reputation, who can discuss Kant's *Critique on Pure Reason* with Herbert Spencer to his own enlightenment, and whose drawing-room is thronged with real celebrities—that young person simply does not exist. Nor, for that matter, does the club-man, that hero of modern fiction, who is the mere appanage of his valet. There are a great many men who belong to good clubs—in fact, I am one of them—but the sort of man you read about is not of the number. Many of the men whom I know keep valets, while a still greater number do not. But they are employed as servants, and not as topics of conversation or mentors of form. Strangely enough, you cannot tell the difference between a man thus served and one who is not."

"But wouldn't you call Miss Smithers a brilliant woman?" inquired Kate.

"Heavens no!" rejoined Telford. "She cuts a brilliant figure in the mythical New York that papers of the *Megaphone* sort have created, but that is simply because she fills her parlors with people whom she imagines to be celebrities because their names are constantly in print. There's nothing brilliant in that, and her achievement seems particularly small when you consider that she doesn't know the difference between real distinction and mere advertising. If that kind-hearted, well-bred, credulous, and sweet-natured woman knows the real names of

all the foreigners she entertains and the various occupations that furnish them with a livelihood she is ten times as brilliant as I think she is. It's a pity that a woman who has as many good qualities as Carolyn Smithers should devote her time, her thoughts, and her father's money to the winning of a place in the public estimation no better than that occupied by Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, who has no good qualities whatever, so far as I have found out. By the way, I suppose you know that she contributed to your downfall by writing a letter to Barshfield asking him to discharge you?"

"Are you sure of that?" demanded Kate, eagerly.

"Absolutely sure," responded Telford. "Your friend Penfield shifted the responsibility for the East Side pictures on to your shoulders, and her letter came along at the same time."

"It's pretty hard," said Kate, with a slight tremor in her voice, "to be sacrificed in that way by two of your best friends."

"That's another thing you must rid your mind of before you can hope to succeed—this myth in regard to friends. Most inexperienced women, and not a few who ought to know better, count as their friends the persons for whom they are constantly doing things, whereas it is just the other way. Your real friends are those who are always trying to do something for you. Now you've been of enormous service to Penfield, as I happen to know, but what has he ever done for you except ask you to dinner at a cheap restaurant? I saw him the other day lunching in Delmonico's with Miss Smithers and some other woman. Did he ever take you there? No, I thought not. By the way, did you ever realize how

much you have contributed to his success by the assistance you have given him? There was a certain quality in his work that puzzled me at first. That quality has disappeared."

"But it was Mr. Penfield who brought me to New York and gave me my opportunity," said Kate.

"You mean that your coming here gave *him* his opportunity. He's been relying on you ever since, and you may console yourself with the knowledge that without your aid he will be utterly unable to sustain his reputation. Then he'll come around and try to explain matters and ask you to be friendly again so that you can help him some more."

"Never!" exclaimed Kate, with a vehemence that surprised the other, and pleased him, too. "I'm beginning to see clearly now, and nothing will ever induce me to help Mr. Penfield again or to have anything whatever to do with him. Mother never liked him. She always warned me against him; but I was so blind I couldn't see through him."

"I'm glad to hear that," said the other. "Well, you've only to wait patiently to see him fall. I know Barshfield and his henchmen as the naturalist knows the beasts of the forest, and I can tell you that Penfield is marked for destruction. Do you imagine that Vanderlip and Macy are going to sit quietly by and see him establish himself a step or two above them on the throne?"

"But they've been so friendly with him and helped him so much! Are you sure they want to injure him?"

"There you go again with your talk about friends!" exclaimed Telford. "They're about as friendly to him as he is to you!" He paused a moment and

then went on in slightly altered tones: "You may have wondered why I am content to be a rewrite-man on the *Megaphone* instead of trying to make a name for myself. Well, the reason is that my position is a comparatively secure one. I occupy a little niche by myself outside the line of promotion, and I am safe from the machinations of office politics. Vanderlip and Macy have long ago satisfied themselves that I have no ambition to become city editor or managing editor or anything else, and the result is that they not only let me alone, but treat me with the greatest consideration. I am useful to them because of what I can do with the copy that dull, ignorant reporters turn in. That enables them to dispense with really clever men who might attract Barshfield's attention. Moreover, to be successful in the trade of writing you should believe in what you are doing. I can put my whole heart into the work of improving another man's copy, but I am out of sympathy with this scheme of wholesale misrepresentation that Barshfield clings to. Besides, the real New York is a far more interesting and delightful community than the city of sensational contrasts that journalistic fancy has created."

"But surely the wealth of the city is genuine? I see evidences of that on every hand."

"Oh, there's plenty of wealth, although the *Megaphone* school of thought attributes to it much greater power than it possesses. Don't make the mistake of confounding money with social position. In spite of all the hue and cry about our national love of dollars, mere money does not count for nearly as much here as it does in London, where everything, from a coronet to a marriageable daughter, is mar-

ketable. With a few notable exceptions, the enormously rich families of the town are more thoroughly out of everything worth having than any other class. Their very wealth is an insurmountable barrier between them and really agreeable society, and to my mind they are much to be pitied. It is seldom that anybody ever rings the bell at one of those great, costly mansions on upper Fifth Avenue except to ask for something. The number of very rich people who take an active part in social life is surprisingly small. That is why the changes are constantly rung on a very few conspicuous names in the society columns."

"But I have always heard it said that, socially at least, New York was a place for the rich, not for the poor," said Kate, whose keen, receptive mind was eagerly absorbing everything that the other said. She was a good listener and never missed a chance to learn something.

"That idea is about as ridiculous as any of the other myths that help to swell the *Megaphone's* Sunday circulation," retorted Telford, promptly. "It's a poor place for a millionaire because the demands on his purse and his sympathies—if he has any left—are so constant and exorbitant. But it's a paradise for a poor man of talent or agreeable manners or any other good qualities. I can't speak for your own sex, but I do know something about what the town has to offer to a young man who can give something in return. Society is composed of those who come together in order to eat, drink, and be merry. The rich and idle are only too glad to furnish the food and drink, but they must look to the poor to provide the merriment. Rich people are seldom merry

among themselves. There are about three thousand millionaires in New York and vicinity, and only about forty millionaire names for the society reporter to ring the changes on. Even at that, the joyousness of their revels is largely a myth like the rest of Barshfield's New York—the starving millions, for example. You've already found out how much truth there is in that legend."

"But there must be a great deal of poverty here," said Kate. "To be sure, the East Side wasn't nearly as terrible as I had imagined it. I didn't see anything that looked at all like a slum, but perhaps I didn't look in the right place."

"Of course there are poor people in New York. It is they whom we have always with us. But they're not numbered by the millions. There are those who are incapacitated by age or infirmity and cannot work, and others who will not work; there are also many who are temporarily out of work. But, with the exception of those who depend habitually on charity, the poor are the proudest people in the town. If you want to help them you must seek them out and use all the tact and kindliness at your command to induce them to let you help them. There's more pride of that sort in a tenement house than in a dozen Fifth Avenue mansions. The poorest people of all are those who have to keep up appearances. You can't get up soup-houses for them! In the old-fashioned New York it was customary for the well-to-do to look after the poor whom they knew. Every family had its pensioners; but the big fortunes have changed all that. The distance from upper Fifth Avenue is so great—quite as great as the distance from fifty millions to nothing at all—that there is

no longer the old personal contact between the two extremes of poverty and wealth. The rich give generously—I'll say that for them—but it's to institutions rather than to individuals, and in so doing they have bred professional paupers and professional alms-distributers as well. Too often the millionaire thinks that in giving liberally to a hospital or asylum he has done all that can be expected of him. If he were not so busy he might find that a large proportion of his charity is wasted in salaries to idle secretaries, treasurers, and superintendents. So you see that the deserving poor fall between the upper millstone of careless generosity and the lower one that grabs every dollar as it falls."

"Where does all the money come from? Wall Street?" asked Kate, innocently.

"Wall Street," exclaimed Telford, contemptuously, "is a vast desert moistened by occasional floods of money. During these periods of irrigation the brokers hold out their tin cups and catch what they can; but when the floods cease there ensues such a financial drought as is not known in any other field of industry in the land. No desert in the world absorbs as much as Wall Street, and none yields as little in return. What is called "making money" there means simply successful betting on the volume of the floods that regulate the market."

"But what becomes of all the money that pours into the desert?" persisted Kate.

"That is a problem that has puzzled the wisest philosophers in the town," replied the other. "The greater part of it finds its way into pockets already well lined; good-looking actresses, traveling in couples for mutual protection, get some now and

then in exchange for tickets for a theatrical benefit; the rest is distributed in small sums through the merry quarters of the town. But not a tenth of the enormous sums absorbed by Wall Street is ever accounted for."

"Don't the brokers spend a great deal of money at their clubs?" asked Kate.

"That's another illusion—the club life of New York," answered Telford. "I suppose you picture to yourself a group of men lolling about a gorgeous room telling one another about their valets? Well, I spent an hour at my club this afternoon waiting to see a friend. For some mysterious reason all the worst bores in the town belong to the best clubs, and nearly all of them are noted for their regular attendance. Judged either by the length of the waiting-list or the number and persistency of its bores, the club to which I belong is about the best in the city. There was an excited group in one of the Fifth Avenue windows when I arrived this afternoon. Somebody had made a bet with somebody else as to how many colored persons would pass the club in an hour. In another window a broker was telling one of those funny stock-market stories —probably about how Charlie got his maiden aunt to exchange her Pennsylvania bonds for Confederate money. Sadly I made my way to the billiard-room, where one of the club wits was awakening roars of laughter with a story that seemed new to every one, although I happen to know that it is graven on the obelisk in Central Park. The fact is," he continued, soberly, "this is a bad town for an idle man. There's something in the air that makes occupation of some sort a necessity. Moreover, an idle man is quite

out of it here. I think that accounts for the number of women who are getting restless and trying to occupy themselves in serious work."

"Those women always interested me, even when I first read about them at home long before I ever thought of coming to New York. Don't you think they're beginning to have a great influence in public affairs?" exclaimed the young girl, eagerly.

"Women have always exerted a great influence in everything," replied the other, gravely; "but don't make the mistake of crediting too much influence to those that the *Megaphone* plays up so persistently in the interest of Circulation, the only god that Barshfield believes in. It pleases the public to think that it was a good-looking young woman who started the cheering at the convention, or led the cigarette-girls' strike, or brought the disabled ship into port, or did any of the other things we say she did. That's much more interesting than if it were done by mere man."

It was half past ten when Kate rose to take her leave. The city of her imagination had been brought down about her ears in hopeless ruins. Telford's words had dissipated the mirage of circulation-building romance and revealed the cold, matter-of-fact reality. She was beginning to see clearly now, but her very knowledge was a source of discouragement to her. She understood now what Telford meant when he said that to succeed it was necessary to believe in what you were doing. A feeling of something like resentment flared up for a moment in her breast at the thought that he had deprived her of the only means of livelihood at her command.

Telford went with her in the street-car. The

theater audiences were dispersing and the sidewalks were thronged with people, some hurrying to their homes and others pouring into the restaurants for a late supper with which to bring their evening's entertainment to a fitting close.

"There's only one feature left of the city of my dreams," said Kate, glancing at the crowds and the glare of electric lights, "and that is the Great White Way. Certainly that, at least, is a reality. With all your cynicism you can't deny that."

"Let's walk these last few blocks," said Telford, rising from his seat. As they gained the sidewalk he resumed his work of demolishing the mirage that still obscured the other's vision. "The electric lights are here, but the crowd is no more representative of New York than the riffraff of the Parisian boulevards represents the real French people. Look at this mob and tell me how many of them are New-Yorkers! I should say that fully three-quarters of them are strangers who have come to see what they call the sights. The real New-Yorkers get off Broadway the instant they leave the theater—you can see them now disappearing down the side-streets—but the jays will continue to gorge themselves in the restaurants and walk up and down the thoroughfare till long after midnight, by which time they and the vultures who prey upon them will have the place to themselves. You can see more jays and yaps and crooks on this block than on the same length of sidewalk in any town in the country. Look at them and judge for yourself what they are. You can understand now why foreigners go back home after a six weeks' stay here and say that Americans have no homes."

The young girl looked around her and was forced to admit the truth of her companion's words. "Is there any real New York?" she cried, in despair.

"Certainly there is. You'll find it in the cross-streets, a part of the town that I dare say had no place in the mirage that the Sunday *Megaphone* offered to your view."

"That's very true," murmured Kate, thoughtfully.

"It is there," continued Telford, "that you will find those wise New-Yorkers who are out of sympathy with the maniacal struggle for millions and the sort of social position that society reporters have created. Too wise to devote their whole lives to a pursuit of enormous wealth, which only a very few of us can ever attain, or a society vastly inferior to their own, they content themselves with a dinner of herbs and pick their friends instead of seeking the acquaintance of those that Park Row holds up for their adulation. To find any sane happiness in New York life you must keep out of the various fierce competitions that are going on all around you. Fifth Avenue simply swarms with outlanders who are willing to shed human blood for the purpose of acquiring millions or getting into society. What chance would you or I have in such a fight?"

"You've destroyed a whole lot of my ideals," said Kate, almost regretfully, as she paused before her door to say good night. "I feel more adrift now than I did the night I came here a perfect stranger. But you've given me an idea of the real New York that I never had before."

"Then I will come and see you very soon and help you to erect a new and real New York on the ruins of your dreams."

CHAPTER XIX

LADY CLARA went out early the next morning, leaving Kate free to resume her meditations. She found herself in a far more hopeful mood than any that she had experienced since that awful moment when Penfield had rung her up on the telephone to upbraid her for her fault and accuse her of ingratitude. More than one of her dreams had been shattered since then, and less than twelve hours had elapsed since the mirage of a city that did not exist had been shattered before her gaze by the cold breath of truth, or what Lady Clara would have called "cynicism." But, thanks to that cynicism, she could see more clearly now, and the thing that impressed itself most deeply on her mind was the fact that women like Lady Clara and herself were at the mercy of men like Penfield and Macy and women like Mrs. Chilton-Smythe. To succeed as they had succeeded meant that she herself must adopt their hard, merciless methods instead of feminine smiles and cajolery. She disliked intensely the idea of winning her place for herself through the alluring power of her sex. It was in this way that women of the class she had seen on the stage, in restaurants, and other public places had achieved their aims. Surely there should be room in the complex and variegated life of the town for a woman to succeed through sheer force of ability. With her

own native gifts, backed by her brief experience in Park Row, such a success seemed to her well within the bounds of possibility, and she resolved that she would try for it. That decision having been reached, a far more difficult problem presented itself. The Woman's Page had no further charm. She had sounded its depths and found them vain and shallow. The mere thought of writing laudatory stories about Mrs. Chilton-Smythe filled her honest soul with loathing. And well she knew that there was not an office in all Park Row in which the name of that famous society leader did not rank high for its "news value."

The weeks that followed proved the bitterest experience in Kate's life. Realizing the necessity for rigid economy, she set herself to the task of reorganizing Lady Clara's heedless and wasteful scheme of housekeeping, stopped her reckless use of telephone, gas-log, and electric light, bought the household supplies herself, and prepared the meals, and by these and other methods brought the cost of living down to a point that proved a genuine surprise to the elder woman when the monthly bills came in.

Lady Clara was delighted and genuinely grateful; so much so, in fact, that she proposed giving a Sunday-evening party for nine of the most worthless of her friends. But Kate put her foot down firmly and at the same time warned Lady Clara that if she did not hand over her week's salary to her every Tuesday until her debts were all paid, she would abandon her efforts at retrenchment for their common good and seek the shelter of a boarding-house, where she could devote all her time to her

own work. Meanwhile she was doing her best to get employment.

She found this no easy matter. She wrote one article after another, usually on some topic of interest to women, and offered them to women's pages and magazines only to have them returned, sometimes with a printed card of refusal, but frequently without a line of explanation. When no less than eight of her manuscripts had made their dreary rounds, seeking vainly for acceptance, she acknowledged that there must be something wrong with them. Something *was* wrong. The illuminating conversation of Ernest Telford had cleared her mind of its illusions and left her incapable of writing the flabby "woman's stuff" that the editors were all looking for. The old skill in the graceful and useful art of elaborating harmless platitudes had departed. She was writing from a new point of view, and for this sort of work there seemed to be no market. Through many hours of melancholy brooding before the gray gas-log, which her economy would not permit her to light, she almost reached the conclusion that she had been wrong in permitting Telford to shed the light of truth on her mind.

At the end of six weeks she found herself with her savings melting toward the vanishing-point and success apparently as far off as ever. She knew that Lady Clara would pay all the expenses of the flat rather than let her give up the game and go back to Graytown; but to sponge on that amiable and long-suffering woman was not to be thought of, especially when she recalled her own sermons to her. And yet to go away and leave her to bear all the expense that they had shared between them would

be almost as bad. Moreover, she had made up her mind to conquer the town, to make a place for herself that would yield her a livelihood and perhaps provide her honestly with some of the luxuries that other women acquired by methods that to her were inconceivable. Urban life had already bred in her heart cravings that she had never known in her country days. She felt that she could not turn her back on all that it had to offer and take up again a scheme of existence, at mere thought of which her whole soul revolted.

To "make up one's mind" means very little in the case of a weak, vacillating nature, but for one who has a mind to make up it is apt to prove nine-tenths of the battle. Kate Craven had a mind of her own, and therefore her resolution to remain in New York, no matter what the cost in privation, anxiety, and the many other ills that dog the heels of those embarking on a "career," was an affair of no small moment, for it meant that she must succeed or perish in the attempt.

At this time a strike of the young women employed in the cloak industry was attracting no small amount of attention. Like all sudden seethings of the metropolitan pot, this valiant but ineffective protest against cruelly unfair conditions had brought a few new names into the printed page that reflects temporary fame and added a few portraits to the gallery of the *Megaphone's* art department. Among these names was that of Sarah von Schneider, who figured in the news columns as a wealthy woman who had devoted much time to the study of sociology in the chief cities of Germany and was now actively engaged in egging on the strikers.

Kate's newspaper experience had long since taught her that "sociology" is a good word to conjure with, not only because of its length and limpid sound, as of falling water, but because its true meaning is obscure to the popular mind and not every one can spell it. In these and other respects it is superior to such excellent words of one syllable as "chair" and "brick," of whose exact significance no one has any sort of doubt and which consequently command no veneration.

It occurred to her now that by interviewing Mrs. von Schneider in regard to labor conditions in the older countries and dishing up her observations under the caption of "Sociological Investigations" she might produce an article which, in view of the local disturbance in the cloak trade, would possess that "timely value" so dear to the editorial heart. With this idea in her head she called on Mr. Marshall at his office in the *Planet* building and briefly laid her scheme before him.

Marshall received her with a kindly sympathy that quite touched her and readily agreed to accept an interview with Mrs. von Schneider. His were the first encouraging words she had heard from the lips of authority since she started out to earn her living as a free lance, and she hastened away to the hotel where the labor agitator was stopping. As she entered the apartment she met with one of the most sensational surprises in her life. Mrs. von Schneider was none other than her old acquaintance—never her friend—of Graytown days, Sadie Hazelrigg, whose elopement with the coachman had given Penfield his great opportunity. She had exchanged the coachman for the "Von" and lost nothing in the transaction.

A sudden recollection of the publicity she had helped to give to the elopement reddened Kate's cheeks, but her momentary doubts as to the other's feelings were quickly swept away as Mrs. von Schneider seized her impulsively by the hand, crying:

"Well, I am glad to see you. When I saw your card I wondered if it could possibly be my little home friend, but I never knew you were working on the *Planet*. Sit down and take off your things and tell me what you've been doing all these years!"

"That's just what I was going to ask you—what you've been doing all these years!" rejoined Kate, smilingly. "In fact, I came here especially to interview you for the *Planet* on the conditions of labor in Europe; but I hadn't the least idea that Mrs. von Schneider was the Miss Hazelrigg I used to know so long ago."

"You dear sweet thing!" exclaimed the other, her face beaming with what looked like kindliness, but which was merely her delight at the thought of getting into the newspaper columns. "Certainly you may interview me. I'll have lunch sent up here, and we can talk as we eat."

"I understand," said Kate, "that you've been in Europe studying the labor question? I haven't heard anything of you since your marriage, so perhaps you won't mind telling me just where you've been."

"In Paris and London most of the time, and in Berlin, too. Oh yes, I studied the labor problem everywhere. I suppose you read about how I led the strike last Tuesday? It was splendid. I made a speech to them on the sidewalk, and got them so

excited that they made a rush for the scabs when they came out of the shop. Three of them got arrested, but the police were so hateful they wouldn't arrest *me*, though I dared them to. One of them had the impertinence to tell me to go home and mind the baby. I think the police force is a disgrace to the city, and, what's more, it's rotten with graft. But the *Planet* printed my picture the next day with the heading 'The Joan of Arc of the Cloak Strike.' It's a wonder you didn't see it in your own paper."

Mrs. von Schneider looked at her reproachfully—a little suspiciously, Kate thought, as she hastened to answer.

"I never dreamed it was you. But what did they do to the girls they arrested? Send them to prison?"

"I don't know. I was posing for the *Planet* man and didn't notice," replied the other. "But I'll make them arrest me next time if I have to break a window. Then *all* the papers will have to take notice of me. But, after all, what can you expect in a graft-ridden town like this?"

"How do women's wages in Germany compare with those in this country?" asked Kate.

"Oh, I guess they must be higher; anyhow, the working-women that I saw seemed to look all right. The same way in France. There's nothing anywhere in Europe as bad as the conditions here, with thousands of starving people everywhere in the town."

"Whereabouts?" asked Kate, rather sharply, as a memory of the well-fed children who had proved her own ruin came back to her.

"Whereabouts?" echoed Sadie. "Why, over on the East Side and down in the slums. I've been studying the labor conditions, and I ought to know.

Now, take the case of those poor girls that got arrested! I feel for them because they've got their living to make the same as you have. Say, I tell you what would be a grand idea! Take a picture of me in the midst of them all and call it 'The Modern Joan of Arc Leading her Hosts on to Victory.' That would help to fill out your page nicely."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Kate, brightly; "I'll write an interview with you about the question of women's wages here and abroad on condition that you stand for everything I say."

"Sure I will," said Sadie, emphatically.

"And I'll try to get your picture in, too, if there's room."

"And don't forget about the modern Joan of Arc!"

The interview, made up from a recent magazine article skilfully retold in dialogue form, was sent to Marshall and appeared the following Sunday, to the great delight of its author and the still greater joy of the modern Joan of Arc. Kate read it carefully through, seated before the gas-log, lighted in honor of this hopeful change in her fortunes. Lady Clara had gone out to lunch with some friends who hoped to borrow money from her, and a peaceful, Sabbath-like air pervaded the little flat. The fifteen dollars that she was to receive for the article meant a good deal to Kate just now, and it meant still more to realize that the luck had changed at last and that her hand had not altogether lost its cunning.

Late that afternoon she received from Mrs. von Schneider a letter congratulating her on the "nice little story" she had printed, and offering to furnish her with material for another whenever she felt that

she was running short of ideas. Her tone was that of one conferring a favor, and Kate smiled cynically, recalling others of the kind that she had received in the past from Mrs. Chilton-Smythe. Somehow the thought that she was getting only fifteen dollars for bestowing undeserved fame of much greater value on Mrs. von Schneider was not a pleasant one.

"For what reason should I devote my life to making other people famous?" she asked herself. And then from the clear sky of her imagination the terse reply came: "For money!" It was precisely at this moment that Telford, who possessed the gift—far more rare in men than in women—of appearing now and then when he was badly needed, presented himself at her door.

"Well, have you arrived at any conclusions regarding your career?" was his query, as he laid aside his overcoat.

"I've been thinking of becoming a sort of press-agent," she replied, and she rapidly made known to him her idea.

"An excellent scheme," said Telford, with something like real enthusiasm in his voice. "Press-agency is a profession of growing importance in this country, and one that very few understand. Papers like the *Megaphone* have not only stimulated a thirst for fame, but have also shown that it was within the reach of even the least conspicuous citizen. Just as the early settlers introduced rum among the Indians and then supplied it to them at a profit, so has an enlightened press created a thirst for notoriety, thereby founding a trade that offers glorious opportunities to those wise enough to take

advantage of them. In olden times only a few kings, poets, statesmen, and warriors gained fame, and then they had to work for it. Now it is to be had for the buying. Its fitting symbol then was a wreath of bay leaves. Now it is a smear of greasy printer's ink. Modern ideas have greatly facilitated the progress of the climber up the difficult heights of Parnassus. I take it that you propose to show the easiest route to those who linger about the base, uncertain how to gain the summit?"

"That is precisely my idea," replied Kate, "only you have clothed it in such beautiful language that I scarcely recognize it. Moreover, you have invested it with a poetic idealism that raises it to a plane of such lofty dignity that to call it 'press work' would be to vulgarize it. Please proceed with your work of illumination. Why don't you smoke? I know you like to."

"Thank you," said Telford, drawing a cigarette from his pocket. "I fancy I talk better when I smoke, but I am apt to talk longer, too, so you know what lies before you. To begin with, you have not only chosen an excellent calling—to supply a much-needed commodity is always a sound commercial proposition—but also one for which you are well fitted by native talent, sharpened by experience."

"Bitter experience, too," observed Kate.

"The only kind that gives a razor-edge to the tools of effort," rejoined the other, promptly. "Our life here below is so ordained that you can always avenge yourself on evil fortune by learning something from every ill that befalls. Your periods of happiness and prosperity, your streaks of good luck seldom teach you anything. One thing that I think

you are beginning to learn is the difference between things as they are and things as they appear to the popular mind."

"Any knowledge that I have on that subject I owe to you," said Kate, with a polite bow. "You have opened my eyes. But at the same time you have deprived me of some of my confidence. I feel rather adrift just now. It's not so easy for me to write if I've lost faith in what I am writing, and I am not yet safe on my feet in the real world that you were good enough to show me."

"Nothing easier in the world!" exclaimed Telford, emphatically. "You must regard this imaginary world as the stage of a theater presenting an illusion in which the audience believes, and with you yourself as a manager who arranges the different scenes and tells the players what parts they are to perform. Some will be club-men, others brilliant women like Miss Smithers, others great leaders of philanthropic betterments like Mrs. Chilton-Smythe—and you alone must realize that they are all actors working, not for the glory of society or the advancement of humankind, but for their own salaries or their own renown. Now you must find some one who will be willing to pay for the privilege of appearing among the other puppets in a rôle of distinction—one that will make a deep impression on the open-mouthed clowns who make up your audience. There are always plenty of people anxious to appear in the lime-light. All you have to do is to find one or more who will pay liberally for the opportunity. The question is, who will be your first client?"

"I was wondering whether anything could be done with Roberta Rowenna," said Kate, tentatively.

"Has she any money?" inquired her mentor, in business-like tones.

"Lady Clara tells me she has an independent income of her own."

"Then try her, by all means. And, remember, she must have a distinct rôle to play on your little stage—one that will present her in a much more favorable light than that in which she appeared in the divorce court. Women of that sort are always fond of posing as leaders of intellectual movements. So if you can think of some form of what is termed 'uplift' in which she could take part it will certainly appeal to her. You can't satisfy her with a few paragraphs stating that she is about to join the Milwaukee stock company or that she has abandoned her idea of appearing in the Bernhardt repertoire."

"But I can't imagine Mrs. Rowenna doing anything intellectual. She seems to be entirely destitute of brains. Lady Clara says she's all temperament and lives on her emotions."

"Temperament and psychology," said Telford, promptly, "are two of the most notable words that have been let loose in the dramatic profession since I first began to go to theaters. They are largely accountable for the decay in the art of acting, for which they provide a cheap, easy, and frequently nasty substitute. What is called 'psychological acting' bears the same relation to the true art of the stage that oleomargarine does to butter and brass to gold. And remember that doing something intellectual and doing something that will impress the ignorant as intellectual are two totally different things. I advise you to call on Mrs. Rowenna at

once and see if you can't cook up something between you that will have a fine, brassy, intellectual ring. I wonder if you couldn't make use of that idiotic Stadium scheme that somebody has suggested."

"I don't quite understand," said Kate.

"I think it suits your purpose exactly," replied Telford, after a moment of quiet thought. "This proposition is to dig a hole in some fair spot like a lawn in Central Park, and there construct an amphitheater to hold thirty thousand people in which actors who find it difficult to fill a bay-window may appear in plays that the public do not care to see. If you were to call it a hole in the ground it would have no appeal whatever, but the word Stadium transforms it into something of which the dominant minds of the town can safely approve. You can make the project your own by simply calling it the Staditorium. The learned classes in this town always favor long names for intellectual enterprises. My dear child, the idea is superb!"

"Mr. Telford," said Kate, speaking with the quiet intensity of a woman who is not to be trifled with, "I wish you would tell me if you are joking or speaking the truth. Remember this is a serious matter to me, for if I can get the papers to take up this absurd scheme I can induce them to print anything about anybody. Why, the thing is so preposterously silly that I should be ashamed to offer it to a newspaper."

"Certainly it is a preposterous scheme," replied Telford. "That's why I think so highly of it. All the cultured classes will be sure to fall for it. Can't you see that every college professor and everybody else who wants to get into print will indorse this

worthless project? Offer it to your Rowenna woman, and you'll see that she'll jump at it! Then come to me, and I'll show you how to work it to the best advantage. Go to her now, and I'll walk along with you."

CHAPTER XX

SHE found Mrs. Rowenna dressing to go out. A maid of darkest imaginable hue admitted her to the disorderly little parlor hung with pink cretonne and furnished with sofas and easy-chairs covered with soiled damask. A few colored reproductions of well-known paintings adorned the walls, and the place of honor over the mantelpiece was filled with a huge representation of a disheveled woman with rolling eyes and flowing hair clinging to a cross. Under this picture a row of signed theatrical photographs stretched across the entire length of the mantelpiece. Among these Kate recognized several of Mrs. Rowenna herself in different stage costumes, including one very pretty one in tights. There were also many portraits of an "actory"-looking man—no other word describes him—labeled "Walter Floodmere."

"Miss Rowenna say fo' you to rest hyar a spell, an' she'll be in d'rectly," said the maid, with a friendly show of teeth; and the visitor seated herself in a bulging easy-chair while the colored girl resumed her duties as tiring-woman.

"You dear sweet thing!" cried the actress, bursting into the room a moment later in handsome walking-costume. "I've wondered and wondered why you never came to see me. A dozen times I've been on the point of writing to ask you to come and

have supper after the theater, and then I thought perhaps you didn't care about knowing professional people. But I see I misjudged you. Now do sit down and tell me all the news! How are you, dear? And how is dear Mrs. Grimmond?"

Kate colored slightly as she realized that she would have scorned to call on Mrs. Rowenna had she not wanted something of her, and because of this consciousness she found it hard to state her errand. She began a little awkwardly to explain the trouble that had overtaken her, and, although Mrs. Rowenna hastened to express her sympathy, a slight change in her manner was quite apparent to her visitor, who continued with deepening color: "I wondered, Mrs. Rowenna, if you couldn't find some work for me in keeping you before the public? I can write pretty well, and I know a lot of people on the different papers."

The actress regarded her thoughtfully for a moment and then made answer. "If you could really get the papers to print something favorable about me I wouldn't mind paying for it, but so many reporters have tried it and failed that I'm discouraged. Every bit of free advertising I ever had I got myself. Now I've been wondering lately if I couldn't fake up something on the line of a highbrow show that would bring a lot of college professors and parsons down from the high perch with a bundle of indorsements. You see, my divorce got me in wrong with all that push, and it's up to me now to do something to take the curse off. Now if Walter and me was to come out in favor of something high-browed it would put us before the public in a new groove so they'd forget all about the divorce

business, and then maybe the papers would stop making funny cracks every time my name came up. Do you think you could get something printed about us in that line of work?"

Ignorant writers are apt to talk about the value of a sense of humor, but the truth is that a keen sense of the ridiculous is a luxury that only the rich can enjoy with safety. To any one in Kate's position the possession of this extra sense is often a serious bar to success. It was with no small difficulty that she kept her face straight long enough to assure the actress that that was precisely the idea that she herself had had in mind, adding: "What do you think of taking up this Stadium idea?"

"The Stadium?" said Roberta, thoughtfully. "That's a theater where the ancient Greek parties used to give shows, ain't it? Well, the name sounds sort of good to me."

"But I've got a better name!" exclaimed Kate, brightly. "Let's call it a Staditorium!"

"That's certainly better," said the actress; and it was then agreed that Kate should try her hand at press work and receive payment if she accomplished anything. Greatly elated, she proceeded to call on Mr. Marshall at the office of the Sunday *Planet*.

Telford had advised her to make plain from the very first her own position. "Not every woman," he said, "sees the advantage of being on the level in this business. But if you explain frankly that you're this woman's press-agent it disarms the suspicion that sits for ever at an editor's elbow. Then, if he likes you, he won't object to doing you a good turn."

Marshall received Kate with genuine cordiality. Both he and his wife had liked her from the start and their indignation had been aroused by her unjust dismissal. Consequently he was in a mood to help her in any way that did not jeopardize the dignity and influence of his paper. He listened closely as his visitor unfolded the plan for the Staditorium, but his nods of approval changed to a negative shake of the head when she coupled Roberta Rowenna with the scheme.

"The Staditorium is all right," he said, "but I'm afraid we can't stand for your friend Roberta as the originator of it."

"But," said Kate, in dismay, "I'm trying to bring it before the public in her interest and for her money. It wouldn't be right to credit somebody else with it."

"Is the name hers, too?" asked Marshall.

"No; I invented that myself—or rather a friend of mine did."

For fully a minute Marshall sat gravely pondering. "How would this do?" he said at last. "Write me a column indorsing the proposition to build a Stadium in New York modeled on ancient lines. Don't mention any names, but say that the scheme is indorsed by many persons of eminence. Then this Roberta woman can write to the paper saying that the Staditorium, a conception of her own brain, is the very thing the city needs, and she can back this up with letters from different wise guys testifying that they have every confidence in it."

"But suppose the papers fail to recognize the superiority of the Staditorium over the Stadium?" said Kate, inquiringly.

"The longer name will kill the shorter," replied

Marshall, confidently. "With that name in your hand and the high purpose of booming Roberta Rowenna as an inspiration, you can go forth like a Crusader of old to conquer or die."

Kate went home and wrote a glowing description of the proposed Stadium, asserting that it was the one thing needed in the town to develop the native drama. Then she called on two or three of the nonentities whose ambition it is to be known as "prominent citizens"—the last ditch of meretricious fame—and extracted from them signed letters fervently indorsing the plan. Marshall read the article and accepted it, and Kate repaired to Roberta's flat to report progress.

She found that eminent artist in a very bad temper, the result of a quarrel with Floodmere. All her enthusiasm for the Stadium had evaporated, and she listened with petulant indifference while Kate told her what she intended to do. She made no comment until she was told that her name was not to appear in the *Planet* article; then she burst out: "I'd like to know why not, pray!"

Kate hesitated a moment and then replied gently: "Mr. Marshall thought it would be better to begin without mentioning any name at all and then fasten your name to it the next day by means of letters in all the papers."

"That's not the reason, and you know it!" screamed Roberta. "Gawd knows he printed my name often enough in his nasty old paper at the time of my trouble, when I was a heartbroken woman and every paragraph about me was like a hot iron laid on my shrinking flesh. Now he wants to rob me of the credit for a scheme as dear to me as my very

heart's blood, and you have the nerve to come here and tell me that it's a good thing to have my name left off entirely. I little thought, Miss Craven, when you pretended to be my friend and sat at my table, that I was nursing a viper in disguise."

"I never sat at your table in my life!" exclaimed Kate, amazed at the hysterical outburst.

"Well, if you didn't, that old Lady Clara did, and that's the same thing!" retorted Roberta, who had now worked herself into a state of angry tears. But before Kate could answer, a latch-key clicked in the door, and a tall, clean-shaven man entered the room.

"Walter, this is Miss Craven," said Roberta, peevishly. "I was wondering what had become of my night-key, and now I remember you took it when you went back last night to get my umbrella and forgot to return it. Let me have it now, please."

The new-comer went through the farce of returning his own key and meanwhile eyed the visitor with a look of undisguised admiration. Kate noticed that he had regular, mobile features and dark, rolling eyes. A certain gentle charm in his manner appealed to her at once, and his voice had a rich, exquisitely modulated quality that gave her a distinct thrill.

Roberta now dried her tears and explained that Miss Craven was the lady who had offered to put the scheme of the Staditorium before the public but had "made a botch of the whole business."

"I can scarcely believe that," replied the actor, in a finely sympathetic tone that was in marked contrast to Roberta's raucous, undisciplined voice. "Miss Craven strikes me as a lady who could manage such a business with the greatest tact and skill. But," he added, placing his hand tenderly on

Roberta's arm, "you are all wrought up now and in no condition to discuss business matters. Miss Craven will excuse you now, I am quite sure, and take the matter up with you again later in the week."

Kate was only too glad of an excuse to retire, and Mr. Floodmere gallantly escorted her to the elevator. As Mrs. Rowenna's door closed behind them his whole manner took on a new shade of tender solicitude as he said: "I know you will be generous enough to overlook anything that poor Roberta may have said in her hasty, impulsive way. She has been under a terrible strain of late and hardly knows what she is saying. You must talk over this matter of the Staditorium with me, for I have every confidence in your ability. Can you meet me at the Plaza at five this afternoon? I will bring Mrs. Rowenna, and we can talk it all over calmly over a cup of tea."

Kate eagerly agreed to the rendezvous. The prospect of settling a dispute that threatened to upset her well-laid plans, and also take tea in a fashionable place with an actor of renown if not distinction, was an alluring one, and she hurried home in a state of joyful anticipation.

Floodmere was waiting in the lobby for her, and she knew by the way his eyes rested on her that she found favor in his sight. Of course she looked upon him as irrevocably sealed to Mrs. Rowenna, for had not that actress declared in her own hearing that theirs was "a marriage in the sight of God as much as if a priest had mumbled his blessing over it"? But it was pleasant, nevertheless, to realize that even a man as much in love as she firmly be-

lieved Floodmere to be was not altogether insensible to her charms.

"At last!" cried the actor, as he sprang forward and seized Kate by the hand. "I was so afraid you would not come at all."

"Of course I came," said Kate, naïvely. "I'm too anxious about this job to let any chance slip by. Where's Mrs. Rowenna?"

"Roberta asked me to tell you that she had a sick headache and hoped that you would be so good as to excuse her. Shall we go in and find a table?"

Floodmere preceded her as they marched through the crowded tea-room, thus giving her an opportunity to note the perfect cut of his coat, the crease of his gray trousers, and the gloss of the silk hat he carried in his hand. It flattered her to feel that he had considered it worth his while to make such an elaborate toilet in her honor; nor was she blind to the fact that their progress across the room awakened a distinct buzz of interested comment. A dozen feminine tongues whispered his name as they passed, and once she heard a masculine voice inquire, "Who's the girl with him?" and the reply, "Oh, some actress, I suppose. She's pretty, though."

It was all quite exciting, and there was a pretty color in Kate's dimpled cheeks when they seated themselves at a table that seemed to her rather conspicuously placed for a quiet chat on a mere matter of business. Floodmere ordered tea and cake and then fixed his large, rolling, melancholy eyes on his companion and said, "Now, tell me all about your scheme."

Kate Craven was a good talker, especially when,

as in the present case, she was thoroughly interested in her theme. She waxed enthusiastic as she expounded her plan for a Staditorium; and Floodmere, always susceptible to feminine influence, listened attentively and more than once signified his hearty approval. His devotion to his art had never interfered with his scent for publicity, and he saw at a glance the value of the project as a means of placing his name and Mrs. Rowenna's conspicuously before the public. Furthermore, he was quick to see that the atmosphere of scandal which enveloped both their names might perhaps be dissipated could they succeed in claiming popular attention as the champions of a "high-brow" scheme of such stupendous magnitude.

"What would be your idea as to the class of plays to be given?" he inquired; and Kate answered that the classical drama was the only thing possible.

"For my own part," she continued, gravely, though the temptation to laugh was almost irresistible, "I can think of nothing better than some Greek drama like 'Œdipus Rex,' for example."

Floodmere nodded his approval as a vision of himself in snow-white draperies, revealing his bare legs —of which he was inordinately vain—flashed across his mind.

"Little one," said the actor, in tones almost as deep and sentimental as those that he usually employed in heavy emotional scenes at a Saturday matinée, "I believe you are a real genius. The sooner you spring the Staditorium on the public the better I shall be pleased."

Very much emboldened by these words of frank praise, Kate went on to the difficult and delicate

task of explaining why it would be necessary to keep Mrs. Rowenna's name out of the initial story. She had done a little quiet thinking since her talk with the actress earlier in the day, and now she thought she could see a way out of her difficulty.

"I'm glad you like my idea," she said, "because I've got my first announcement written, and the *Planet* will print it next Sunday. Mrs. Rowenna did not fancy the form in which it was written, and that was what we were discussing when you came in this morning. It was at the advice of the Sunday editor of the *Planet* that I left her name and yours out entirely. He's a particular friend of mine and disposed to help me all he can. Besides that, he's a man of enormous experience in all kinds of newspaper work, and I'm ready to act on any suggestion he has to make. He says that the wisest course will be to first print a general article about a Stadium being the one thing needed for the development of dramatic art in New York. The next day you must appear in all the newspapers with a description of your Staditorium, claiming that you have been working on it for years and that it contains all the good features of the Stadium and a good many more besides."

Floodmere was not a man of intellectual gifts, but he was cunning in knowledge of theatricals, and Kate's argument made a deep impression on him. It had always been his ambition to figure in the public eye as an exponent of the intellectual drama; not that he had any intellectual tastes himself, but because it was so easy, and Kate's scheme seemed to him ridiculously easy. What she had to offer was a ready-made intellectual pose guaranteed to

fit, which he could slip on overnight and perhaps wear for an indefinite number of years. To put on this pose required neither thought nor hard study—both of which he detested. He knew enough of the town to realize that under the broad mantle of enthusiasm which the leaders of thought would cast over the Staditorium there would be room and to spare for him and Rowenna. Leaning across the table, he murmured:

"Tiny one, why is it that the cruel gods kept us apart all these long, weary years?"

Unaccustomed as she was to the tricks of the "actor-voice," Kate thrilled at Floodmere's words. Nor was she indifferent to the look, suggestive of unutterable things, that accompanied them. What he would have called "giving her the eye" had, blended with the gently modulated notes of his voice, cast a magic spell about her senses. In a flash there came to her a comprehension of at least one reason why Roberta Rowenna had left home and husband to follow this compelling voice. In another flash she found herself wondering if such a shallow woman were really capable of understanding him. What a silly, insincere creature she was, after all!

Floodmere, never unaware of his own powers of attraction, was quick to note the effect of his words and almost as quick to follow them up. The game of flirtation—some would call it by an uglier name—was one in which he had the skill bred of long experience, unhampered by scruple. With a sigh almost as thrilling as his words, he went on:

"If I had known you three years ago it might have made a great difference in both our lives. But,

alas! what's done can't be undone—at least not in a single moment. Perhaps," he murmured, half to himself, his eyes roving beyond hers with what she thought was a far-away look, "perhaps I have been too jealous of the fair fame of a woman to think of my own interests or of what was due to my art. Ah, well, what does it signify, after all? We players strut our brief course across the stage, win the passing tribute of a smile or a tear, and then—oblivion. Little does a heedless public reck of the heart that beats behind the mask, of the dreams and hopes of him who must often play the clown to tickle the ears of the groundlings. How many do you suppose of yonder cackling, tea-drinking swarm ever give thought to the soul that lies behind the actor's art? Bah! the thought sickens me. Let us away from this scene of pitiful frivolity."

I firmly believe that the most destructive engine of modern times, so far as the feminine heart is concerned, is that well-modulated vocal organ, the exclusive possession of actors and clergymen, the "actor-voice." It was by means of this that Floodmere had won for himself a far better place in his profession than he really deserved. Backed by his dark, rolling eyes and an intense earnestness of manner, the same voice that was so effectual on the stage could be made to accomplish wonders with young and impressionable women whose good fortune it was to meet him face to face.

Kate Craven was not in any sense an impressionable girl. She had never been really in love with Penfield, but, as not one of the men whom she had met in New York had seriously enchained her fancy, she had come to believe that her feeling for him must

be the divine passion of which poets sang and of which she had been reading all her life. Now she realized that Floodmere's finely trained voice was sounding depths in her soul that neither Penfield's bluff geniality nor Telford's gentle courtesy and unselfish kindness had ever reached. She realized, too, that she had been secretly pleased by the knowledge that, even when talking about his soul, the actor had fixed his eyes on the graceful outlines of her figure with the same hungry, devouring look that she had resented in the case of other men. She rejoiced in his admiration, so well had the actor-voice accomplished its work. His contempt for the "cackling, tea-drinking swarm" seemed to her magnificent. How many actors, she asked herself, would have the nobility to despise all those idle, adoring women? As she followed him out of the tea-room a sudden remembrance of Mrs. Rowenna fell upon her gay spirits like a gray cloud. With his high sense of honor Floodmere would, of course, feel bound to make her his wife as soon as the knot could be legally tied. But suppose the "impossible" husband were to persist in his refusal to apply for a divorce? Surely in that event no man, no matter how noble, could be expected to make a perpetual sacrifice of himself, and perhaps of some other woman! Without realizing what it signified, Kate Craven had reached a very dangerous point in the rapid progress of her infatuation—the point at which she felt sorry for the man who had cast his spell over her.

It was after six o'clock when Floodmere left his companion at her door, saying, as he clasped her hand and held it in a warm embrace: "You have

done me a world of good to-day with your beautiful talk and your high ideals. I shall call on Mrs. Rowenna as soon as possible and make her see this matter of the Staditorium as we see it."

The next day it was arranged between them that Kate should undertake the creation of the Staditorium, it being fully understood that she was not expected to build it, but merely to cause its erection in the popular mind, which, as Telford assured her, was the only site possible. She was to receive fifty dollars a week for her services, and if the Staditorium were to become a reality she was to have steady employment as its press-agent.

CHAPTER XXI

KATE entered upon her new duties in a curious state of mind. For the moment Penfield and his treachery were forgotten, and Telford and Floodmere divided her interest, the one dominating her mind and the other her emotions. It was Telford whom she consulted at every step in the path of her new endeavor; but the eyes that filled her mental vision and the voice that sounded ceaselessly in her ears were Floodmere's. Both men called on her almost daily. Telford usually appeared early in the afternoon and the actor late in the morning; the one to ask her how her scheme was working and help her solve its various knotty problems, the other to suggest new methods of publicity and assure her that he would never forget the invaluable services that she was rendering him. To neither of the two men did she mention the visits of the other, and, while fully appreciating the value of the rewrite-man's unselfish interest and wise counsel, it was to the visits of Floodmere that she looked forward with the keenest anticipation; his rolling eyes and splendid actor-voice that lived in her imagination.

Meanwhile the Staditorium was making tremendous headway. The original description of the Stadium in the Sunday edition of the *Planet* was followed by a letter from Mrs. Rowenna outlining the scheme for a Staditorium which she affirmed was

her "life-dream," and on which she declared that actual work would soon begin. Owing to its skilful wording Mrs. Rowenna's letter, written by Kate, received wide publicity and was quickly followed by the indorsements of the learned and intellectual classes. The first of these was in the form of an interview, obtained by Kate, at the advice of Telford, with the occupant of the Chair of Dramatic Literature in a Western university in which he declared that the establishment of the Staditorium would unquestionably rescue the native drama from the grasp of commercialism. The learned professor added that in his opinion it would be wise to devote it exclusively to the production of plays by native dramatists, having in mind certain very promising pupils, not to mention a few unacted dramas of his own.

This interview brought a prompt answer from another eminent scholar, who had not been inside a playhouse in twenty years, favoring the classic and Shakespearian dramas as best suited to the work of raising the American stage to the highest possible dignity. In this lofty view he was supported by an elderly histrion, long unemployed, who wrote from Staten Island to make known his delight at the prospect of a revival of the works of the Immortal Bard, and to offer his services for the rôles of Horatio or Laertes. No other playwright, he declared, could drag him from his retirement.

By this time the Staditorium had served the purpose for which it was intended, for it had opened the columns of the press to the numerous company that desired to see themselves in print and from whom a stream of communications and interviews

now gushed forth. A leading settlement worker expressed the greatest enthusiasm for the plan, even going so far as to say that she was prepared to assist by recommending it to all the people in her neighborhood as a means of self-culture. The Rev. Henry Westmoreton had his attention drawn to the enterprise and promptly preached a sermon in favor of it which Kate contrived to have fully reported, thus securing a most valuable indorsement.

Kate Craven had not been gone from the *Megaphone* a week before Penfield began to realize how much he had come to depend on her. More than ever he regretted that he had neglected to make friends for himself in the office. Nothing could have been more polite than the attitude which Macy and Vanderlip maintained toward him, and yet he knew they stood ready to "put the knife into him," as Park Row would have phrased it. And among all the staff there was not a single man or woman on whom he could rely for personal loyalty save poor Lady Clara, and she was but a feeble reed to lean on. Besides which he knew that she must despise him for his treatment of Kate. Penfield had always denied the value of friendship in a successful career. Now he suddenly found himself stranded on an icy peak without a solitary friend within call. He realized with feelings of intense bitterness that he might perish there from cold or hunger for all the *Megaphone* staff cared. He wished now that during the period of his rapid climb up the steps of the throne he had contrived to attach to himself a few loyal souls. But, like most selfish, ambitious men, his gaze had always been so firmly fixed on those above him that he had neglected to pay any attention

to those less successful than himself, and in many instances he had shown an utter disregard of their feelings. All of which goes to show that Penfield was profoundly ignorant of the principles that govern life.

But Penfield's self-confidence was supreme. He had climbed high, and he could climb still higher. That he possessed in the highest degree the royal favor he did not for a moment doubt, and in this knowledge he found speedy consolation. Neither Vanderlip nor Macy could dislodge him now. In his dreams he saw them relegated to obscurity and he himself installed as sole representative of his master's will, perhaps the inheritor of the throne.

But this self-sufficient young man did not stop to consider the difference between constitutional and autocratic rule, between a prime minister chosen to represent the will of the people, and the chance favorite of a monarch's unstable fancy. So he addressed himself to his work, secure in his belief in his own powers and the continued approval of his master, while the office staff, despising him for his selfishness and his cowardly desertion of the only friend he had, ranged themselves against him as a solid mass and asked one another how long he would last.

The fact that he was making headway in what he called the "social swim" did much to dissipate the feelings of doubt and uncertainty that sometimes forced themselves upon his consciousness. The truth was that he had been taken up by some of the semi-public women of society who saw in him a golden opportunity for the exploitation of themselves and the various pet schemes or "movements" that

claimed their attention. He had also gained a rather hazardous foothold as one of the band of "interesting men—men who do something" that cluster about the approaches to society and impede the usual traffic. Miss Smithers frequently asked him to dinner and seldom failed to put him next to some woman who wanted something, which was her idea of "bringing interesting people together." Mrs. Chilton-Smythe also bade him to some of the less distinguished of her revels, and never missed an opportunity to tell him about herself and the Woman's Betterment Society and to offer him her latest photograph. Other women, shrewdly noticing the manner in which this gifted young journalist returned thanks after meat—and sometimes even before it—in the columns of the Sunday *Megaphone*, hastened to "take him up," as they put it, the result being that he soon found himself on half a dozen rather conspicuous visiting-lists and in receipt of a cordial invitation from Mrs. Chilton-Smythe to "drop in any day at lunch-time."

Penfield plumed himself on his success in "getting into society," and almost unconsciously began to imitate the mannerisms of the idle young men of fortune or quasi-fortune whom he met in the drawing-rooms that he frequented. This fact was quickly noted and discussed in the great whispering-gallery of Park Row. The naïveté with which he repaid the hospitality of his new friends by printing their portraits and exploiting their pet schemes in the columns under his control, just as he had exchanged puffs for the favor of liverymen and saloon-keepers in Graytown days, was also noted with grim satisfaction by Vanderlip and Macy, who well knew that

the outer reaches of society form a dangerous quicksand for the inexperienced ones who have something to give in return for dinners and opera tickets and the luncheons to which they may "drop in any day."

The society reporters of other papers, than whom no one is quicker to bow before a new god, also took cognizance of his activities in the social groove and sought to win his favor by printing his name as often as possible in the groups designated as "among those present." There is no telling when one may be out of a job and in sore need of a possible friend at court. And of the many in Park Row who watched Ned Penfield's progress, only Vanderlip and Macy knew absolutely that he was walking on a very thin crust beneath which lay the consuming fires of envy, hatred, and malice.

Another was watching his course from afar off, but with still keener interest than the two editors, and that was Barshfield, still flitting about Europe, but keeping a sharp eye on all that went on in his New York office. His mind, always open to the voice of suspicion, had been disturbed by the thought of the secret intimacy between Penfield and Miss Craven, which he regarded as almost treasonable conspiracy; and now, reading the Sunday supplement with a new and clearer vision, he noted the complete absence of the feminine quality that had once attracted and puzzled him. In order to put his suspicions to further proof he cabled to Penfield bidding him print more matter suited to the tastes of women.

When Penfield received this despatch he involuntarily thought of Kate Craven. Never before in all his career had he needed her as he did now. Straight-

way he began to devise schemes of reconciliation. He would pay her out of his own pocket, if he could not persuade Barshfield to take her back, for he had reached a point in his career when she was a necessity to his further advancement. Since the morning when he called her up on the telephone and addressed her in terms that he now regretted, but which still rankled in her heart, he had not spoken to her. He could only guess what her feelings were toward him. But, after all, she had been vexed with him now and then during the long period of their intimacy, and he had always contrived to appease her. What had been done more than once could be done again, and he determined to write or perhaps call on her with a view to renewing the old relations.

Like all men who pride themselves on their deep and intimate knowledge of women—and there are not many of us who do not cherish this illusion—Penfield regarded them as the weaker sex intellectually as well as physically. That they should crave any stronger meat than was to be found on Lady Clara's page never entered his mind. Therefore when he received Barshfield's cable he summoned that experienced purveyor of what is not inaptly termed "woman's stuff," and asked for a few suggestions for special articles. Eager to oblige the man whom she regarded not only as her benefactor, but also as the most powerful figure on the staff of the *Megaphone*, Lady Clara hastened to ransack her memory and quickly exhumed from that mausoleum of worn-out topics what she called, through sheer ignorance rather than mendacity, "a few live ideas." The most honored of these was the

list of American women who have married into the British nobility, held in high esteem because of its utter lack of interest and the enormous number of times that it has been printed. She also suggested a series of articles to be called "Society's Self-supporting Sisterhood"—Lady Clara's long suit was alliterative captions—to consist of highly imaginative accounts of the manner in which certain women, for the most part unknown in the social world, gained their bread by means of such lucrative enterprises as raising violets or squab or frogs for the market, conducting tea-rooms, and teaching etiquette by correspondence.

Penfield hastened to carry out these novel and valuable suggestions and also added a bill of fare for every day in the week, prepared by Miss Minturn, who lived in a boarding-house and had never kept house or cooked a meal in her life. But despite these well-meant efforts to enchain the simple fancy of the gentler sex the circulation of the Sunday *Megaphone* steadily declined; of which fact Barshfield was duly apprised by the circulation manager, one of the three men whom Penfield had ejected from the office in which he now reigned alone. Then came a sharp cable from abroad ordering the substitution of "something original and up to date" for the various features that Lady Clara had evolved from her ripened memory.

This was the severest blow that Penfield had received since he first entered Barshfield's employ, and he resolved to put what he called his "pride" in his pocket and summon Kate Craven to his aid. Powerless to reinstate her on the paper from which she had been discharged by royal mandate,

he wrote and appealed to her on the ground of their old friendship, expressing contrition for his rudeness, and assuring her that he had used all his influence with his employer to save her. He had reached, he said, the critical moment in his career. Between him and perhaps the greatest triumph ever achieved in Park Row in so short a time there lay but one obstacle. With her assistance he could surmount it. This accomplished, he would see to it that she was restored to her former place. What he had suffered from remorse God alone knew. The same Power that had been a silent witness of his heart-breaking grief could also testify to the honesty of his present intentions.

It happened that this letter reached Kate at a critical moment in her own fortunes. She had been singularly successful with all the Sunday papers except the *Megaphone*, for her pride had prevented her from asking even the smallest favor from the man whom she had once regarded as her one devoted friend. Now, as she read his pitiful appeal for help, she asked herself if it would be possible to renew the old relations. Like every man who ever did an irreparable injury to a friend, Penfield was quite willing to let bygones be bygones, and, as the emotional feminine heart is seldom wholly immune from this ingenuous appeal, Kate's feelings softened perceptibly as she read. Then her common sense came to the rescue, and she laid the letter aside, resolved to ignore it altogether.

She could not, however, put it altogether out of her head, and that very day Mrs. Rowenna, who, like every inferior player, never really believed that she was receiving half as much newspaper notoriety

as she deserved, remarked fretfully that she hadn't seen anything about the Staditorium in the Sunday *Megaphone*.

Telford called the next day, and Kate showed him Penfield's letter. He read it through studiously and without comment, but twice a smile of amusement flashed across his face.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked, as he handed it back to her.

"I'm very much in doubt," she made answer. "That's why I'm so glad you came. I wanted to consult you."

"Surely you are not thinking of going back to that fellow again after the infamous way in which he has treated you! Can't you see that he never would have written to you if he hadn't wanted to use you? He's in a hole and thinks you can pull him out. A scalded dog knows enough to keep away from hot water, and if you're going to succeed in this cold town, you must have at least as much intelligence as a poodle!"

"But there's another phase of the question, and a very important one, too, that I haven't told you about," replied the other, and thereupon she explained the quandary in which she found herself, and made it plain to him how necessary it was for her to have access to the columns of all the papers, especially the *Megaphone*, which was read by Mrs. Rowenna and every one of her friends.

Telford remained for a few moments in quiet thought, his eyes fixed on his companion as if trying to read her emotions. Then he said:

"Which of the two do you need—Penfield or the *Megaphone?*"

"I never want to see Penfield again," rejoined Kate, with a bitterness in her voice that left no doubt as to her real feelings at the moment. Telford was relieved to hear her speak in this way, although he could not quite drive from his mind the knowledge, acquired long since by bitter experience, that in a woman's heart love and hate occupy adjoining rooms, with a connecting door between. "But it is very important for me to gain access to the Sunday *Megaphone*, and you know he controls that absolutely. Oh, dear! I only wish I were a man. This hateful question of sex turns up in even the coldest matters of business."

"What you call the hateful question of sex is the very essence of all human happiness," said Telford, half to himself. "If you intend to succeed without it you must fight with the same weapons that men use. If you were a man you would get even with this fellow for what he has done to you."

"But," said Kate, "women are not supposed to get even with men who treat them badly. In all the great novels I've read the heroines who are smitten on one cheek meekly turn the other. That's why they are so popular—especially with you men."

"All the great novels were written during or prior to the Victorian era," replied Telford. "They undoubtedly reflected the spirit of their day, but the position of women has altered tremendously since then. Good God! for the last two years you've been filling your woman's page with your 'New Woman,' as you call her, telling us how independent she is, and how she runs the farm and the iron-foundry and raises violets and acts as secretary and adviser to the money kings, and yet you don't

seem to have discovered that her position *has* changed since Thackeray created Amelia Sedley. You're in competition with men now in a field that was once theirs exclusively. Don't let one of them get the better of you just because you want to live up to the standard of a mid-Victorian heroine."

When Telford took his leave half an hour later, Kate said to him as she gave his hand a warm pressure: "You've made everything clear to me. What's more, I'm going to put aside my feelings and do everything that you say."

She waited a few days before replying to Penfield's letter, for she well knew the value of keeping a man "on the anxious seat," as Lady Clara phrased it. And while he was worrying himself with doubt and uncertainty Kate was deliberately planning a campaign that should accomplish everything she wished for. Little did he dream of the change that had taken place in the girl whom he had once molded so easily to his will, and to whose unselfish, unswerving loyalty his success was so largely due. Nothing shocks a self-centered man more than the sudden realization that the woman who has been his faithful tool has in some way acquired a clear vision of him and begun to think for herself.

And just as Kate had been awakened to a comprehension of things through a succession of thunderclaps, so did the other arrive at knowledge through a series of shocks. He received the first of these when, in response to a coldly brief note, he called at Lady Clara's flat and attempted to take his former friend in his arms. He received the second when that same former friend indicated the conditions under which she was willing to save him. The

first of these was a fixed salary of fifty dollars a week, which wrung from him a groan of anguish, as he knew that he would have to pay it out of his own pocket. The next was that the arrangement between them should remain a secret. In return for these favors Kate was to furnish special articles and suggest others.

"What's got into that woman?" said Penfield to himself, morosely, as he went on his way. "She's as hard as nails, and she seems to know that I need her. That's the way with women! No matter what you do for them, they forget about it when it comes to driving a bargain!" And as he rode down-town he formulated in his mind a list of the things he had done for Kate without even thinking of all she had done for him, and was thus able to reach his office in the mood of an early Christian martyr.

CHAPTER XXII

KATE'S first contribution to the Sunday *Megaphone* was a description of the home life of Roberta Rowenna, the beginning of a series to be called "Women Who Do Things." It represented her as much courted by society but refusing all invitations in order that she might devote herself to her studies of the higher intellectual drama. She was quoted as saying that the ambition of her life was to build the Staditorium and dedicate it, by her services, to the glory and stability of dramatic art. In the photographs that illustrated this piece of fiction Mrs. Rowenna was shown reading a large book, with others heaped on the table beside her. On the same table was an hour-glass—an artful touch on the part of Kate, who had borrowed that classic recorder of time from a friendly shopkeeper, to whom it was returned directly after the departure of the photographer. The books went at the same time.

The second story of the series related to Carolyn Smithers, and was artfully contrived to exasperate Mrs. Chilton-Smythe to the last point of endurance, for it contained a hint of impending changes in the leadership of the Woman's Betterment Society. In this story Miss Smithers was proclaimed the unquestioned leader of the fashionable intellectual set; her drawing-room the place in which society, art, science, and literature met on common ground.

Both stories were extremely well written, for Kate had long since learned her business; and Penfield, little dreaming that she was Mrs. Rowenna's press-agent, and being himself ignorant of that actress's unsavory record, had both of them put in type.

The publication of the Rowenna myth awakened a great variety of emotions in the breasts and minds of the persons chiefly concerned in this story. For once the actress was thoroughly satisfied with the efforts of her press-agent. She wept with temperamental joy as she read of her intellectual accomplishments and gazed upon the reproduction of the photograph for which she had been carefully posed by Kate. Floodmere read it with a brow that darkened with disapproval when he found that it contained not a single reference to himself. Vanderlip and Macy read it together, their heads almost touching across the page proofs that had been stolen for them from the press-room by the faithful Tops. Then, as their eyes met, their faces were illumined by smiles not unlike those that they had worn on the morning they found the East Side story with the pictures of fat children.

"He's digging his own grave pretty fast," remarked Vanderlip; "but who do you think wrote that story? I have my suspicions."

"It was very much like that Craven girl," replied Macy. "Do you think it possible he's got her on his staff again after throwing her down the way he did?"

"I don't know," said the other, thoughtfully; "those cold-blooded, selfish men have a great pull with women. But if it's the Craven's work, I rather incline to the belief that she's giving him the

double cross. I understand she's doing press work for the Staditorium, as they call it, and that's this Rowenna bird's scheme. Certainly she must know that such a fake story as that will get Penfield in wrong with the boss."

To Lady Clara's sloppy soul the story seemed, as she expressed it, "perfectly lovely." She had worked so long on women's pages that the line of demarcation between truth and mendacity had long since been wiped off her mental map. Penfield was also highly pleased and declared it to be "good woman's stuff," a term signifying something attuned to the mentality of a poodle.

Meanwhile, under Kate's skilful guidance the Staditorium was assuming stupendous proportions. Not that anybody wanted it or was ever likely to want it. Not that a site had been secured, or a brick laid, or any money raised for its building. Like the marble court-house in a new suburban real-estate enterprise, it was merely a thing of paper and ink, which is the stuff that modern dreams are made of. Its energetic press-agent pasted into a scrap-book all the interviews, letters, and special articles printed about it and was appalled at the results. It seemed to her that the sympathies of the entire thinking element in the town had been enlisted in behalf of a project so absurd that, but for Telford's sage counsel, she would have been ashamed to offer it to any editor for serious consideration.

Her mentor, calling on her one afternoon, found her with the scrap-book open on the table and proceeded to examine it with his customary air of amusement.

"You have certainly done well," he remarked, "but I don't see any interviews with the regular theatrical managers. You ought to get some of them to talk."

"But they surely would not speak favorably of a scheme, even a wholly imaginary one like this, that is in direct competition with their own houses?"

"Why not?" said Telford. "There is nothing that a manager likes better than to see somebody else invest money in a theater that is bound to fail. His visionary mind always sees the possibility of renting it himself at a cheap price. There's another element that you might utilize, and that is the one that listens to lectures on the uplifting of the drama. There's a feeble-minded ass named Herbert Pennyroyal, who goes around lecturing on the need of a municipal theater, and I think you might get him to espouse the cause of the Staditorium, which is only a shade less idiotic than that of a theater managed by the city authorities, which would enable any alderman to take his uncle off a broom and cast him for Hamlet. I need scarcely tell you that Mr. Pennyroyal has a large following among the owlish classes of this remarkable town who actually pay to hear his lectures and eagerly voice their approval of his project."

Acting on these wise suggestions, Kate called on one of the chief theatrical producers of the town and asked him if he would express his opinion of the proposed Staditorium.

Mr. Rosenthal, who had read of the Staditorium and already conceived the idea of leasing it for a moving-picture show, replied gravely that it was a move in the right direction and on that score

deserved the hearty support of every one who had the interests of the American stage at heart. Speaking for himself, he hoped that it would soon become an accomplished fact and a powerful agent in the great work of uplifting public taste, in which he himself had long been engaged. His brother managers, he surmised, would be found to entertain views similar to his own.

Kate next sought out Mr. Pennyroyal and inquired with much seriousness if he had ever thought of putting his vast knowledge of the drama to practical use in theatrical management. Mr. Pennyroyal, a flabby young man with very long ears and an owlish cast of countenance, hastened to make answer that the dream of his life was to direct an artistic playhouse. He listened with close attention to his visitor's description of the Staditorium, and was greatly delighted to learn that the projectors had had an eye on him as one of the most promising of the "moderns" and a man capable of carrying out their ideas in a thoroughly artistic manner.

Mr. Pennyroyal having swallowed the bait, Kate left him to digest it, and a fortnight later was rendered incredibly happy by the printed announcement that he was to lecture on "The Staditorium—the Dramatic Need of the Hour" at a famous college where they will listen to anything.

Telford laughed when Kate, a little shamefaced, explained the hope she had held out to the aspiring youth. "Don't let your conscience trouble you," he said. "He's working in his own interest, like most of the enthusiasts whom you've enlisted in your cause. And, besides, if the Staditorium is ever built you can easily make him the manager. What an

enormous area this imaginary New York occupies!" he added. "To look over your scrap-book, with its great flood of testimonials, sermons, interviews with prominent citizens, and lectures by ignoramuses, one would think that the entire town was clamoring for this ridiculous project. And yet there isn't a single word from any one who either offers to contribute a dollar of money or asks to buy a ticket of admission. In other words, you seem to have the support of all classes save the only two that really count—the capitalists and the playgoers. By the way, who is the Finnish poet whose portrait with the whiskers and the fur overcoat accompanies his letter in the Sunday *Megaphone?*"

Kate smiled roguishly: "He's a little invention of my own. I found him tending the furnace in this building, and his whiskers made him look so learned that I tied Lady Clara's fur boa round his neck and gave him a dollar to pose for me. Penfield tells me he has received two letters from people asking where they can get his poems!"

"My dear Miss Craven," said the other, "you reveal a spark of divine genius. Whiskers and a fur overcoat make a deeper impression on the people of New York than the highest forms of learning. You are creating some wonderful illusions—so wonderful, in fact, that I fear you may be deceived by them yourself. Work that Finn for all he is worth. He fits into the picture perfectly. Get Penfield to print a paragraph saying that his poems have never been translated, and don't forget to mention the Staditorium. What did you have him say in his letter?"

"I had him say that the Staditorium had long

been the dream of every poet and dramatist in Finland, and that when the one in New York was completed he proposed to come over here in order to take part in the dedicatory exercises, bringing with him an ode to Thalia. Was that right?"

"My dear, you were more than right!" exclaimed Telford, with an enthusiasm unusual with him. "Of all persons in the world no one should know less of the needs of the New York stage than this Finnish bard; and of all the people who have contributed to your scrap-book there is none whose honest opinion is better worth having than this humble person who fixes the furnace. There is not a single great historic playhouse in the world that has not sprung directly from the lowly class to which he belongs."

"The poor man said he went to the theater whenever he could afford it," said Kate.

"Precisely," rejoined Telford. "He and his kind are the only ones who can create a distinctive school of drama. And yet to give his words any weight you have to tie Lady Clara's fur boa round his neck and pretend that he's a Finnish poet, and therefore not qualified to express an opinion. If you had said that he was the man who fixed the furnace, and was therefore competent to speak, this wise town would have laughed at him with the smug complacency of ignorance. You are certainly sage beyond your years. I am afraid there is nothing more that I can teach you."

There was one thing that the rewrite-man could have told this still unsophisticated country girl, and that was the danger that lurks in a pair of dark, rolling eyes and a voice attuned to the emotional

chords of the feminine heart. Unfortunately, she never consulted him in regard to this most perilous of pitfalls, although there was no other matter concerning herself in which she did not give him her full confidence. In fact, she kept silent regarding the constant visits of Floodmere, telling herself that it was no one's business but her own, yet knowing in her secret heart that she was in fear of Telford's flaming sword of truth that would assuredly be drawn to drive her out from the fool's paradise in which she was living. Much as she had learned from Telford about the real world in which she lived, he had not taught her the most important lesson that youth or maiden has to learn and which only a very few ever completely master. He had shown her how to look about her with a fairly clear vision; he had shown her how to deceive the public with her absurd Staditorium; but he had not taught her how to turn her eyes inward on her own soul so as not to deceive herself.

The truth was that it never occurred to him that this cool-headed young woman, for whose intellectual qualities and personal character he felt an esteem that was fast growing into something infinitely stronger, could possibly need his aid in the task of guarding her own affections. He knew, of course, that she frequently saw both Floodmere and Mrs. Rowenna, as she was the press-agent of both; and knowing, as he did, the relations existing between the two players as well as Kate's high moral character, he never guessed that a close intimacy was springing up between the actor with the emotional voice and the young woman who was making him famous. In short, he was ignorant of the compelling

power of the actor-voice, which signifies that he did not understand women as well as he thought he did. Nor did he realize that the mere fact that, although she constantly spoke of her dealings with Mrs. Rowenna, she scarcely ever mentioned Floodmere's name, was something that would have long since put a wiser man on his guard.

Meanwhile the actor was making the most of his opportunities. To do him justice, his passion for Kate was the most sincere and the least selfish of any that he had known in his life—and he had had countless love affairs since he first stepped from behind a counter into the bright light of the calcium. He knew instinctively that she was an innately pure woman—he was familiar enough with the other kind—and the knowledge lifted his quest of her up to a higher plane than that of any of his previous wooings. Her intellectual qualities appealed to him also, and he knew that it was useless to appeal to her with the wretched sophistries about "marriage in the sight of God" that Roberta had absorbed and digested so easily. Once he had voiced his admiration for a famous English writer, calling her "the glorious woman who dared to defy conventions for the sake of love," but Kate had replied promptly that she would have proved herself far more glorious had she not, and he had promptly dismissed the topic from his amorous repertoire.

It may seem strange to some of my readers that a young woman as clear-sighted as Kate should permit herself to drift into an intimacy with a man whose moral ideas she knew to be loose and whose intellectual qualities were of the most commonplace order. If her mother could have had but one good

look at him we may be quite sure that that sagacious woman would have sounded the note of alarm with no uncertain voice. But Mrs. Craven was two hundred miles away, and Kate had never mentioned the actor in her letters home, stifling her conscience with the reflection that "mother doesn't understand these things." And besides, there was the compelling charm of the actor-voice.

Moreover, Floodmere was playing his cards with an extraordinary skill born of long and varied practice in love-making, an avocation which, like violin-playing, is carried on most successfully by those who do nothing else and can therefore give their whole time and attention to it. And as Kate concealed her growing infatuation from her mother, so did he keep silent to Roberta regarding his daily visits to Lady Clara's flat. Whenever Kate called on Mrs. Rowenna, Floodmere made a point of going out, and he even contrived to put that keen woman off the scent by occasional reference to the beauty and charm of one of her most intimate friends. It is true that this aroused jealousy and finally led to a scene of mutual recrimination, precipitated by the arrival of a bunch of violets to which no card was attached and which the actor had craftily sent to himself. But such scenes were not rare in their lives, and Floodmere withdrew from her presence, chuckling at the thought that he had her "barking up the wrong tree."

In truth, it was a mess of sordid trouble into which Kate was being led by the will-o'-the-wisp of the actor-voice and rolling eyeballs.

CHAPTER XXIII

AND all the time Telford was finding it harder and harder to keep Kate's image out of his mind. Never what is termed a "marrying man," he had long since settled down to a life of quiet domesticity with his mother, whom he loved more than any other woman. He felt that his first duty was to her, and he gladly spent all of his slender income on her comfort, saying nothing of what it meant to him in the loss of the luxuries to which his bringing up at the hands of a wealthy and indulgent father had accustomed him. He still retained his membership in the Fifth Avenue club, which his mother would not permit him to give up, for she regarded it as the last link with the great world of power and wealth and fashion. Telford had long since relegated to the background of memory the various love affairs of his early manhood. More than once he had considered marriage seriously, and he had even become engaged to a young woman whose name frequently figured in the social chronicles of her day as "one of the season's débutantes." This had happened soon after his graduation from Harvard. His father's bankruptcy a year later broke off the match, and within another twelve months he compelled himself to a period of rigid economy in order to send her a dozen silver spoons with a letter wishing her "every happiness."

"It costs money, but it's worth it," was his philosophic reflection as he turned down that page in his book of life.

And now, at forty-two, he once more became conscious of the fact that he still possessed a heart and that its cravings were forcing themselves upon his attention with a persistency that he could not disregard. Kate Craven appealed to his fastidious taste in a thousand different ways, not the least of which was the fact that she had withstood the rigors of Park Row life—enjoyed its good and bravely endured its evil—without deterioration of character. That she was intelligent enough to absorb his illuminative discourses and profit by them was another point in her favor; that through him she had learned to see life with a clearer vision made her doubly dear to him. Nor was he insensible to her beauty. Her small, tempting mouth, her straightforward eyes, the exquisite curves of her rounded figure, all played havoc with his imagination and disturbed him at his work. But his duty to his mother stood like a stone wall between himself and all thoughts of marriage. And besides, what right had he to assume that this most attractive young girl, still in her early twenties, would unite her fortunes with those of a man who had so little in the way of worldly advantage to offer?

He tried, as many a man similarly placed has tried, to exclude her from his thoughts by keeping away from her, but a fortnight of this self-inflicted misery left him more sorely torn with anxiety than before, and he decided to see Kate at all hazards, if only to find out whether or no she had resumed her old intimacy with Penfield.

She received him in her usual frank and friendly fashion, but seemed quite unconscious of the fact that an unusually long time had elapsed since his last call—an attitude of mind that mortified him not a little. She had not seen Penfield for nearly a month, she said; nor did she want to see him. But she was still working for him, sending suggestions and preparing special articles. Had Telford seen last Sunday's portrait of Walter Floodmere seated in his library reading a book on Roman architecture in order to get ideas for the Staditorium? That was her doing, she informed him with a merry laugh, adding, "That's the fourth I've rung in on Mr. Penfield on that important project. I'm beginning to believe that he's not quite as smart as I used to think he was. And when you remember that I'm getting fifty a week from him and fifty more out of the Staditorium people you'll have to admit that I'm doing pretty well for a girl who was down and out a few weeks ago."

"You are certainly doing remarkably well," he replied, greatly relieved on the score of Penfield; but the next moment the old feeling of jealousy returned in a new form. It was evident that she merely regarded him as a friend—perhaps merely a useful one, he thought with sudden bitterness. She must be in love with some one, if not with Penfield. Who was the lucky man? If he only knew his name he could at least hate him. He was still brooding over this harassing question when Floodmere's name was announced, and a minute later the actor entered the room, resplendent in frock-coat, sharply creased trousers, and immaculate linen, and bearing in his hand his glossy silk hat. He bowed low over Kate's

hand, raised his large, expressive eyes to her face, and murmured, "Little one, you seem tired!"

And the answering look in Kate's eyes was not to be mistaken. Telford knew now whom he had to hate, and he addressed himself to the task energetically and without delay.

"This is my friend, Mr. Telford," murmured Kate, and the actor bowed with cold formality. "Mr. Telford is one of the editors of the *Megaphone*," she added; and Mr. Floodmere smiled cordially and advanced with outstretched hand. There was no telling when an editor might become a useful friend or a malignant enemy, and that was a matter of no small importance to any actor of the school that ranks the press above the public.

The rewrite-man, concealing under a genial exterior the ravening wolf that gnawed his vitals, remarked with a cordiality that was a surprise to their hostess: "I saw a picture of you in the *Megaphone* last Sunday. I should have known you from the likeness."

"A picture of me!" exclaimed Floodmere, who had mailed a hundred copies of the page to his friends and was carrying one in his pocket at that very moment. "Ah yes. I remember now. Some one called my attention to it yesterday. I must get a copy."

"The picture showed you in your library reading a book on Roman architecture," continued Telford, innocently, "and the story that accompanied it spoke of your great interest in the subject."

"Yes," said the unsuspecting player, "it has always been a favorite study of mine, especially now that I am busy with my plans for the Staditorium."

"And of mine, too," responded Telford, with cheerful approval. "Of course you've read Cataline's famous address to the Romans on the importance of open-air theaters? What he said then applies to modern theatrical conditions as well as to those of his day. Plutarch's essays on the proper construction of the Stadium I've read so many times that I must know them by heart. However, it's no use in talking to an authority like yourself, for you're probably more familiar with the literature on the subject than I am."

"Yes, I've read a great deal," replied Floodmere, uneasily, and then the rewrite-man continued:

"By the way, there's a favor I'm going to ask of you one of these days, and that is to have a look at your library. I should judge from the photograph that you were a scholar or literary man rather than an actor."

"My dear fellow, I should be delighted to oblige you," said the other, "but the fact is, I sent my books to the storage-house just a few days ago, as I expect to go on the road shortly."

"That's too bad," said Telford. "However, the next time we meet I shall hope to hear more about your proposed Staditorium and the school of architecture that you've decided on. To-day I am in a hurry to reach my office."

Greatly relieved, Floodmere sprang to his feet and cordially shook the other's hand, while Kate, scarcely less relieved, but with an angry color in her cheeks, bade him a chilly adieu. He had put her admirer at a disadvantage, and she was very much annoyed.

Telford went away more perturbed in spirit than

ever. He had been quick to notice the effect on Kate the moment Floodmere entered the room, and the look in her eyes as she returned his admiring glance had told the story of her infatuation only too plainly. He himself had read the shallow mummer like an open book. Now he resolved to find out something about him, and accordingly he sought out Penhallow and asked him carelessly if there was anything in the Staditorium scheme that the papers were giving so much space to.

"There's something in it for our friend Miss Craven," replied the dramatic critic, "and that's why I mention it in respectful terms from time to time, but I must say I should like to see her devoting her talents to some more worthy enterprise."

"I knew Miss Craven was doing the press work, but I was wondering who was backing the enterprise," said Telford.

"It hasn't any real backing that I know of," rejoined Penhallow. "An alleged actress named Roberta Rowenna and a bad actor named Floodmere are its sponsors, and they're getting quite a little glory out of it, thanks to our talented young friend. I'd prick the bubble in a minute if it were not for her. I guess everybody in this office would like to see her make a living. I notice that even her one-time friend of the Sunday issue is printing a lot of stuff about it, possibly to ease his conscience. The whole scheme is amateurish, and Rowenna herself is an amateur of the worst sort who tried to act on the strength of her scandal, got a few engagements at first—she's a pretty woman—and then dropped out of the running till she bobbed up as a champion of the classic drama. Floodmere is an

amateur, too, but he has a pull with women and can usually command a good salary. But they're a worthless pair, and I hope Miss Craven will get into something better before long. I've seen her at the theater or on the street with Floodmere several times lately, and it struck me that she was taking him quite seriously."

Penhallow's last sentence was like a blow in the other's face. He turned without another word, made his way back to his desk, and sat there for fully ten minutes in abject misery. For the first time he acknowledged to himself that he was hopelessly in love and that the only way out of his unhappiness was through marriage. Why, he asked himself with feelings of indescribable bitterness, had he not admitted his passion long ago and offered himself to Kate before she fell under the spell of this actor with the smooth tongue and the rolling eyeballs? Then suddenly he thought of the real danger that threatened her, and he determined to do his best to save her, even if it cost him the friendship that had become so dear to him. And never before had this friendship seemed as precious as now that he was in peril of losing it. A spirit of self-sacrifice took possession of his soul, bringing with it something like peace.

How to proceed was the next question. Kate was one of the purest-minded girls he had ever known, and the actor a man of notoriously loose morals. Surely if she could be brought to a full realization of Floodmere's true character she would recoil from him with horror. He determined to see her without delay, and with a sense of something like relief he applied himself to his work of rewriting.

And while this very sincere friend was devoting himself unselfishly to Kate's best interests, Floodmere was making a far more effective appeal to her sympathy by awakening in her breast those emotions that lie even closer to love than does the bitter hatred that is born of jealous longing. Indeed, while the rewrite-man was sitting before his untouched manuscript the actor was tearfully explaining to his press-agent that not only was he unable to pay her the month's salary due that morning, but that he was under the painful necessity of applying to her for a small sum of money sufficient to tide him over till the arrival of certain remittances on which he could absolutely depend.

"The fact is," said Floodmere, "Roberta, although the noblest of women, is heedless in money matters. Her allowance is always spent before it reaches her, and then, of course, she has to turn to me. I cannot refuse her anything she asks, and the result is that the end of the month finds me without the means of meeting our necessary expenses. Of course, our embarrassment is only temporary, but you know how important appearances are in our business, especially when we are in the public eye in connection with a scheme of such colossal magnitude as the Staditorium. I am literally forced by our necessities to apply to you for a small sum to enable us to keep afloat until fortune turns our way. I wanted to go to our bankers, but she said no. It would injure our credit and destroy public confidence in the Staditorium were it known that we were in need of money at this critical moment. Then we both thought of you as one who could keep a secret and whose generous heart might

be appealed to. You may judge what it has cost me in humiliation, in the lowering of my pride of manhood, in self-abasement to come to you with this plea for aid."

With a sudden, almost convulsive movement Floodmere rose from his chair and walked rapidly toward the window, where he stood gazing out into the street. It seemed to Kate that the shoulders under the beautifully fitted coat shook with emotion. She noticed also the crease in his trousers. The handkerchief flashed from his breast pocket to his eyes, diffusing its agreeable scent. Never before had he seemed to her so noble, so unselfish, so disinterested as in this moment of his appeal to what men who live by stirring feminine emotions call the "maternal instinct." Deeply touched by the compelling arguments of the creased trousers, the well-fitting coat under which the shoulders quivered, and the soft notes of the actor-voice, she exclaimed:

"I'm glad you came to me for help. How much do you need?"

There was an emotional quality in her voice that reached the actor's keen ears and added a hundred dollars to the amount he had intended to ask for. "If you could possibly spare three hundred and also let our account with you run on for a little while it would save both our lives," he replied, without turning his head.

"I shall be glad to let you have it," said Kate, going to her desk for her check-book.

"Little one," said the actor, as he thrust the slip of paper into the pocket of his silk waistcoat, "you have taught me a lesson to-day which I shall never forget. You have taught me that a woman can be

kind and generous and self-sacrificing as well as beautiful."

He raised her hand to his lips, and with the handkerchief still pressed to his eyes groped his way to the door, thus bringing into play the effective exit that he had used with so much success in the second act of "Fated, Yet Free."

CHAPTER XXIV

LATE that night Penhallow, dropping into the office to read the proofs of his Sunday article, stopped, as he often did, for a brief chat with Telford. "I dined with some friends at Delmonico's to-night," he remarked, "and there was that actor we were talking about to-day. He was alone, and I noticed that he had a quart and then a pint of champagne and a whole roast partridge. He must have touched somebody for the money, for he hasn't had an engagement for months, and I've heard he was quite hard up lately."

"It's curious how the wind is always tempered to such fellows," said Telford, reflectively. "If I were broke I'd find it a hard matter to borrow enough money for such a dinner as that."

"Floodmere looks to me like the sort of man that would get money from a woman, and if a man has that ability he need never work," rejoined the dramatic critic, carelessly. A moment later he walked away, leaving the re-write man deep in thought.

Telford had always prided himself on his ability to distinguish from among his fellows the man who was "broke," and there was an indefinable something in the actor's appearance that suggested to a trained instinct that he had not a cent in his pockets. His clothes fitted him so well that there did not seem to be room anywhere for a roll of bills. Evidently

he had raised some money between that afternoon and the dinner-hour—presumably from a woman, for he was not the sort of man to inspire in other men that supreme confidence that begets a loan. That look of trust Telford had seen himself in Kate Craven's eyes, and he had gone off and left the two together!

About this time Penfield began to realize that all was not going well with him. One or two rather sharp cablegrams from Barshfield indicated that his employer was not altogether pleased with his editing of the Sunday *Megaphone*. He determined therefore to learn from the lips of the circulation manager—a taciturn little gray-haired Irishman who had been with the paper for thirty-five years—exactly how he was succeeding with the public.

"We're doing better this week; we're almost holding our own," was the Irishman's terse and humiliating reply.

"Do you mean to say that we've been losing ground?" demanded Penfield.

"Right along," answered Flannigan. "We've lost about forty thousand since you took hold."

"I wish you'd told me that before!" exclaimed the Sunday editor, petulantly.

"I'm not supposed to answer questions before they're put up to me," said the Irishman, doggedly.

Penfield returned to his desk and remained for some time in profound and unhappy meditation, after which he went up to Kate's apartment and was received with a cold politeness that showed him plainly that she was by no means ready to return to the old intimacy. Even when he made a clean breast of his troubles and literally threw himself

on her mercy she showed no signs of softening. If he had been a keener observer he would have detected in her eyes a gleam of triumph of the kind that puts a prudent man on his guard.

Kate Craven knew that she had him in her power, but his treachery had left in her soul a bitterness that precluded all thought of mercy. She was learning that revenge is sweet, and she felt less a woman and more a man than she had ever thought possible.

"What do you want me to do?" she inquired, coldly, as her one-time sweetheart brought his recital to a close.

"Help me to build up the circulation again."

"In that case," she said, "I ought to have your position and draw your salary. No; you walked over me into that job, and you can't look to me to keep it for you."

"You seem to forget that I'm paying you fifty dollars a week."

"Yes; to furnish you with ideas, in which you are sadly deficient—not to run the supplement for you and let you take all the credit and money that goes with it."

"Then give me some ideas!" rejoined Penfield.

Kate Craven addressed herself to the double work of unseating Penfield and advancing her own interests with a cynical joy worthy of a blood-relation of the Borgias. If any qualms of conscience assailed her she put them to flight with the reflection that she was fighting a treacherous man with the weapons of his own sex. She brought to this welcome task much native talent sharpened by experience in newspaper work and keen observation. Knowing how women detest all the semi-public, over-advertised

members of their sex who are always obtruding themselves on the attention of the world, she wrote gushing eulogies of those whose claims to renown were the most exasperating to the great sisterhood of the intelligent and right-minded. She made a cunning appeal to the same element through descriptions of the "dainty" homes of certain inferior actresses who were notorious either for having no homes of their own or for having projected themselves into the homes of others. She told how to dress well on two hundred a year, and more than one woman hid the paper for fear her husband would see it. Many others discontinued it altogether for printing a preposterous bill of fare, the purport of which was to show that by economizing on luncheons, when the men of the family were away, great savings in housekeeping could be effected.

In his efforts to curry favor with the highly placed Penfield devoted much of his space to the many stupid and absurd schemes in which fashionably serious women evince fleeting interest. He printed from week to week accounts of the doings of the Society for the Uplift of the Drama, whose mission was to impart knowledge of the stage to the "lower classes"—the only people in town who know anything about it. He enraged half the knowing women in the town by his fulsome praise of the various undertakings of Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, a dominant figure in the mirage of city life and thoroughly detested by those who were aware of the utter emptiness of her brain and heart.

Meantime the circulation of the Sunday paper slowly declined, and the office "sat tight" and wondered who would be the next editor. That Penfield

had proved a failure was generally known, but that Kate Craven had been an active agent in hastening his downfall none, save only those astute partners Macy and Vanderlip, suspected. But as Penfield had not a single friend in the office, except poor Lady Clara, he met only smiling faces and words of hearty encouragement. Vanderlip was even malevolent enough to tell him that the weekly puffs of the Society for the Uplift of the Drama were attracting a great deal of attention. And so they were.

And all this time Kate was steadily keeping the Staditorium in the public eye. It was one of those worthless projects that everybody in the mirage was willing to indorse, and through it many persons whose opinions were quite valueless succeeded in getting into print. Mrs. von Schneider, the Joan of Arc of the garment-workers, declared in an interview that the establishment of this mammoth place of amusement would unquestionably prove an "uplift" to the working-classes despite the fact that, according to her own showing, they were in a state of hungry destitution. However, the poor of New York are never so poor that professional "uplifting" cannot suggest some way for them to spend money.

Floodmere was called an actor simply because he had frequently appeared before the footlights. Neither by birth nor by instinct could he claim membership in the great band of strollers whose art, fleeting though it be, lies closer to humanity and has a stronger and quicker appeal to the heart than any other. His equipment was entirely physical and sartorial. If he had advertised in the *Clipper* he would have called himself a "good dresser,

on and off." His rolling eyes and perfectly fitting clothes, and, above all, the finely modulated tones of his tricky actor-voice, formed a triumvirate of appealing power to the unthinking; but at best he was nothing more than a mere monologist or "specialty" performer, for he had never learned to listen and was therefore unable to blend his work with that of other performers. It was always quite apparent that he was thinking of himself and what he called his "effects," instead of what was going on in the mimic scene in which he had a part.

Now this method of appeal, which lacks the true essential of acting, is peculiarly effective when employed in the noble work of captivating the feminine heart, and Floodmere used it with extraordinary success in his dealings with Kate Craven. Accomplished in the many meretricious arts of attracting attention to himself rather than to the drama, he had always found it easier to compel the sympathies of the women with whom he was talking than to hold an entire audience that contained an element sufficiently enlightened to demand real acting. And he employed these arts with telling effect in the parlor of Lady Clara's flat. He never said a word about love—the time had not yet come for that—but he sometimes spoke of his poverty and of his bitter struggle to maintain the high ideals that had been the constellation of guiding stars of his life; and it was in these fine moments that Kate seemed to see the crown of martyrdom shining on his brow. His poverty she was well aware of, and when he spoke of his ideals she was quite willing to take them for granted, too, though she never knew exactly what they were. She was happy in the thought

that in lending him money she was helping him to attain them.

For some weeks she saw nothing of Telford; then quite unexpectedly he called. He could not fail to notice the coldness of her greeting, for she had not forgiven him for "drawing out" Floodmere on the occasion of his last visit.

"How are you getting along?" he inquired.

"Very well," responded Kate, with an almost imperceptible tightening of her lips, as she thought of what Floodmere owed her.

"Still making a hundred a week?"

With a slight hesitation which helped to confirm her visitor's suspicions Kate replied that she was.

"Collecting it all regularly?" he continued.

"What I haven't collected is perfectly good," she answered.

"Then there is some owing you! Have you been lending anybody money besides?"

"That's something that concerns only two persons, neither one of whom is you," she replied, sharply.

"I've been rather afraid that would happen," observed Telford, regretfully. "When I saw that actor-man with the damp, flowing locks and the rolling eyes I began to suspect what he was after. He has all the ear-marks of a man who lives on women's emotions, and those lie on the direct route to their pocketbooks."

Kate's face flushed angrily as the shaft, barbed with truth, found its mark. Forgotten were the many kindnesses, the unselfish devotion, the wise counsel that had put her for ever in the debt of this

man, than whom she had known none of higher principle.

"Mr. Telford," she cried, angrily, "you have no right to sneer at any one whom you don't know, and especially at a man as noble and self-sacrificing as Walter Floodmere. If I have helped him in his troubles it is because I know him to be the soul of honor. If in spite of his splendid talents he finds himself embarrassed, it is because of his artistic temperament. But he will triumph yet, and the world will recognize him as the great actor that he is."

"Will that be when he appears on the stage of the Staditorium?" asked Telford.

"It will be when he appears on any stage!" replied Kate, angrily. "He only needs the opportunity, and I think it detestable in you to try to crush a genius like that simply because he happens to be down on his luck. People talk about women's jealousy and distrust of one another, but they're not a circumstance compared with men's."

"Good God!" cried the rewrite-man. "I never dreamed that a woman as sensible as you are—sometimes—could fall in love with such an empty-headed ass as that actor-man with the rolling eyes."

Pale and trembling, Kate rose to her feet. Not since her childhood had she been so furiously angry. "Mr. Telford, I don't care to listen to another word. You have insulted me as no man ever insulted me before."

She remained standing, and there was no mistaking the significant look that she directed toward the door. Telford saw in that look his final dismissal; and, although he hesitated for a moment as if about

to speak, he took his hat, bowed to her politely, and withdrew without a word.

As the door closed behind him Kate threw herself on the sofa and burst into tears of rage and mortification. She felt that their intimacy was ended for ever, and she was thankful for it. She only hoped that they might never meet again. She could not forgive him for what he had said. In every one of his words she now saw a premeditated insult.

But how had he learned of her loan to Floodmere? Surely the actor himself could not have told? No! He was too sensitive to have revealed the secret. The delicacy and hesitancy with which he had made known to her his necessities, the reluctance with which he had accepted her check, the emotional quiver in his voice as he named the precise sum of which he stood in pressing need, all testified to the nobility of his soul. But who could have told of the transaction? It must have been Roberta! It was for her even more than for himself that he had asked the favor. But even she would not have told it of her own accord. Telford must have wormed the secret from her lips. It was quite likely that he would not hesitate to spread the news through Park Row. Now she was certain that she could never forgive him, and her tears started afresh at the thought of his treachery.

Floodmere, calling later in the afternoon, was quick to notice signs of trouble in her face, and his own countenance assumed a look of anxious concern as he took both her hands in his and said: "Tiny one, I fear that all is not well with you today. Your eyes are red. You have been weeping. Your cheeks are pale. I cannot bear to see you suf-

fer. It means far greater suffering for me. But if you must suffer, let me suffer, too. When I came to you with my own troubles you hastened to help me."

The actor-voice trembled beneath its weight of tender sympathy. Its effect on the bruised heart to which it was addressed was like that of an opiate given to relieve pain. Under its spell Kate's angry mood softened, and a delicious peace descended upon her. A momentary wish that she might stand there for ever with the actor's hands clasping hers and his dark, melancholy eyes fixed upon her took possession of her soul. Floodmere, whose boast it was that he always knew when he had "made his effect," remained silent, and permitted a smile of ineffable sweetness to spread over his mobile face.

"Won't you tell me what it is?" he murmured, at last, and again Kate thrilled at his words.

"It's nothing," she replied brokenly, "only that one whom I regarded as my friend has—has treated me as I never thought any one could treat me—insulted me!"

Her voice broke in a sob, and Floodmere's brow darkened. "Insulted you!" he exclaimed, with a note of menace in his voice that suggested that his was a dangerous spirit to arouse. His "reserve force" was one of his strong points. "I cannot conceive of any one, no matter how base, daring to insult such an exquisitely divine creature as you. Was it that newspaper man whom I met here the other day? I felt an antipathy to him the moment I came into the room. I knew that his soul was too small to be attuned to ours—yours and mine. Shall I seek him out and demand an apology?"

"No, no!" cried Kate, instinctively tightening her

fingers on his smooth, flabby hand, for his face was like a thunder-cloud, and she feared the forked lightning of his wrath. "He found out that I had advanced you some money—"

"But I never spoke of it to any one—not even to Roberta!" interrupted the actor. "Surely you could not have been thoughtless enough to betray my secret?"

"Of course I did not. That was our affair—yours and mine. I thought Mrs. Rowenna must have told somebody in her reckless way of talking."

"She *is* reckless!" said Floodmere. "That's why I was careful not to let her know anything about the transaction."

This was more than true. He had not even told her that he had any money.

"Somebody must have told him, and I felt so mortified on your account," murmured Kate, brokenly.

"Dear one," said Floodmere, "that you should think of me and my feelings at such a moment is more than I deserve at your sweet hands."

There was a splendid intensity in his voice that was not thrown away, as he could see quite plainly. It was one of the best of his bag of vocal tricks and one that he used sparingly and seldom without success, especially when, as in this case, supplemented by a little expert work with the handkerchief. Then, seating himself and dropping into his colloquial note, he continued: "I almost forgot what I came to talk to you about. I am sure you will be glad to know that I am beginning to see daylight again. There is every prospect of an engagement for both Roberta and myself. If we can

only manage the question of wardrobe it will put us on Easy Street, and in a very few weeks we shall be square with the world and with you, my dear friend—no, not square with you; I can never make up to you for what you have done for us. It is indeed a glorious opportunity. The play is as strong a one as I have ever read. You will faint when I tell you the name of the author, but my sacred word of honor binds me to absolute secrecy. There will be a riot on Broadway when the news leaks out. I only wish I could tell you about my part. It is tremendous, moving, and on such an exalted plane of endeavor that it thrills my soul to think of it. But I dare not give you even the slightest hint of it. As to the costumes, they are simply beyond belief—and there's the rub!"

"What do you mean by 'the rub'?" asked his companion.

"The matter of costumes!" he made answer. "You see, in such a stupendous production as this it is customary for the star to dress his own part, and I signed the contract without thinking of every little detail any more than my manager did. Indeed, I learned afterward that he was so anxious to secure me that I might have got two hundred a week more by merely holding out for it. It was not until the next day that I remembered not only my impoverished condition but my obligations to you, and it seemed as if this golden opportunity was eluding my grasp. It is a bitter thing to have fortune knock at your door and then find that you are unable to lift the latch."

His voice broke at his last words, and the white handkerchief flashed into momentary view.

"How much would the costumes cost?" asked Kate.

"A matter of two hundred dollars!" replied Floodmere, mournfully.

"I can let you have two hundred," said Kate, quickly.

Floodmere, who, as I have said before, always "knew his effects," had been waiting for this cue and was prepared to make the moment a memorable one. He turned slowly in his chair and fixed his dark eyes on his companion. "*You* lend me the money after all you have done for me? No, I cannot take it! My debt to you is too great already. No, little one, it must not be. Rather let this splendid opportunity perish, and even the Staditorium, the idol of my heart, fall in a crumbling heap than accept assistance from your generous hand! But if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget your noble generosity. I had better leave you now. I cannot think of you unmoved."

He rose from his chair, opened the gates of his emotional property-room and permitted a few blinding tears (the most precious of his properties) to course silently down his cheeks. A far better actor on the hearth-rug than before the footlights, he had long since mastered the art of borrowing money in a halo of nobility. Kate was deeply moved by his gratitude and air of tearful self-abnegation. "Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "You *must* take it. I believe in you, and I know that you will pay me when you can."

He raised a protesting hand, and something like a sob escaped from between his lips as she rapidly wrote a check and handed it to him. He tried to

speak his thanks, but could utter no word. Instead he raised her hand to his lips, imprinted on it a fervent kiss, and hurried from the room. The tear-duct valve closed automatically before he reached the elevator, and as he hastened toward Broadway it was a smiling, joyous face that he turned toward the world.

And a woman who had been pacing up and down the opposite sidewalk for half an hour followed him down the street with malice in her eye.

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN a man succeeds in climbing to a high moral plane he is seldom aware of the altitude he has attained. That is one reason why a really conscientious soul is always without a pose. All unknowing, Telford had lifted himself from a state of quite natural resentment and jealousy to the lofty, unselfish plane at which men forget themselves and think only of others. To thus raise himself from human passion to the rarefied air of self-forgetfulness had been a bitter struggle, but now, firmly established above the reach of all mean resentment and envy, a spirit of comparative peace took possession of his soul. During this bitter struggle he had completely eliminated himself, his love, and his hopes from the matter in hand, and cast out the devil of jealousy—a personage not easily dislodged. It was not to defeat Floodmere that he was scheming now, but to save the girl whom he still loved, but whom he looked upon as one who had passed as completely out of his life as that earlier love for whose wedding-gift he had once proudly scrimped and saved.

That it would be worse than useless for him to try to see her again and reason with her he was well aware. And besides, he did not care to see her again, not because of her treatment of him but because she had loaned money to Floodmere,

for he knew only too well that when a woman lends money to a man her soul is in serious danger. It was now only a question of how it could be done without exciting her antagonism. And it must be done quickly, too.

Of course he thought of Lady Clara at once; then dismissed her from his mind as a foolish, sentimental woman, correct in life, but easy-going in her ideas of morality. She would be quite sure to regard with favor Kate's intimacy with Floodmere. Suddenly he remembered what Kate had told him about her old home in Graytown and her mother, who was still living there. She would comprehend her daughter's peril and appreciate the purity of his own motives in summoning her. He would go to her without a moment's delay, and, even at the risk of seeming intrusive, he would put the matter before her in its strongest light.

It was an easy matter for him to obtain a leave of absence, and at ten o'clock on a fine spring morning he knocked at the door of the little white cottage on the outskirts of Graytown and was admitted by Mrs. Craven herself.

"I have known your daughter very well," he said, "and so I have taken the liberty of calling on you. My name is Telford."

Mrs. Craven's face brightened at once, for she had already formed a favorable opinion of her visitor from her daughter's letters, an opinion that was confirmed by one keen glance at the clear-cut, trustworthy face.

"So you're Mr. Telford!" she exclaimed, cordially. "Well, I'm right glad to see you! What brings you so far away from New York?"

And Telford, whose glance at the other's face had been fully as keen and searching as her own, proceeded at once to the matter in hand. He told her of his friendship for Kate and of the pride he had taken in her success in Park Row. He spoke of the respect that she commanded from those who knew her, of her circumspect conduct, of the brave fight that she had made after losing her position on the *Megaphone*. "I suppose you know," he remarked, "that she owed this misfortune to the treachery of a man whom she had looked upon as a friend and trusted accordingly."

"I didn't know it, but I guessed it!" exclaimed Mrs. Craven, vehemently. "I've warned my daughter against that young man from the very first, but of course these young people always know a heap more than their elders. You needn't tell me his name, Mr. Telford. If ever there was a man that had scalawag written across his face it's that Penfield. So Kate has come to see him in his true colors, has she? Well, I'm glad if she's found him out at last."

"I think she has," replied her visitor, "and I'm glad to learn that you always estimated him at his true value. But you know the old saying, 'Out of the frying-pan into the fire'? No sooner was she rid of him than another one, even less desirable, made his appearance, and it was on account of him that I made the journey from New York to have a little talk with you."

He spoke lightly and with a pleasant smile, so as not to cause needless alarm; but Mrs. Craven's keen sense told her that only a serious matter could have impelled this man with the well-bred manner

and honest eyes to undertake the long journey from New York on her daughter's behalf. She made no outcry, nor did her cheek lose for a single instant its normal color. Like every wise person at a critical moment, she sat still and listened. Wiser than most women, she sat very still and listened with tense interest, her eyes fixed on those of her visitor. If she had been playing a tense scene on the stage her quiet listening would have added immeasurably to its effectiveness. Floodmere would have called her a "good feeder."

And while she listened Telford told in quiet speech the story of Kate's infatuation, as it had been revealed to him in unmistakable fashion by the lighting up of her face at Floodmere's approach, by his discovery that she had loaned him money, and by many other signs. Only once did Mrs. Craven give evidence that her feelings had been deeply stirred by his recital, and that was when he said that Kate's admirer was an actor. He had craftily saved this bit of information till the last, and the almost imperceptible tightening of her lips, together with something like a flash from her gray eyes, told him that the utterance had reached her heart. Her old-fashioned Yankee blood was up at the thought of her daughter in love with a vagabond player.

As he ceased speaking she said in low, earnest tones, "Will you tell me, Mr. Telford, just why you have come all this way to inform me about my daughter?"

"Because," he replied, "she has become very dear to me during the time that I have known her. That, however, is a thing of the past. After my

last talk with her, in which I expressed my opinion of this man rather forcibly and, I fear, tactlessly, I doubt if she will care to see me again. But it is quite possible for a man's interest in a woman to survive the deeper feeling, and I could not see her in danger without at least making an effort to save her. That is why I have made the journey, Mrs. Craven."

"I can never thank you enough," said the other, simply. "I have thought for some time that my daughter was hiding something from me—a mother's intuitions are very quick where her only child is concerned—and now that I know what it is a weight is off my mind. I shall take the first train for New York."

"Of course—" began Telford, but she interrupted him.

"I know what you are going to say. I am not going to mention your visit. Then all the fat would be in the fire. All I want is one good look at this actor-man, and I'll know what to say and what to do. Oh, these girls that must needs go to New York and have a career! It's a wonder to me that one of them can come out of that Babylon of iniquity with a rag of reputation on her back. I can't get to my daughter any too quick."

They made the journey to New York together, and at nine o'clock Mrs. Craven found herself in Lady Clara's parlor. All day long she had been tortured by the doubts and apprehensions that forced themselves upon her anxious mind. But these were all swept away in an instant by the warmth of her daughter's greeting and the look in her eyes—the old, honest, straightforward look that

she knew so well—as, after the first rapturous embrace, she held her mother off at arm's-length and gazed at her with an affection that stirred the elder woman's heart as it had not been stirred in many a long year. And as the doubts vanished there came upon her the peace and sense of well-being to which she had long been a stranger.

And while Kate busied herself with necessary preparations—her mother must have her room while she slept on an improvised cot in the parlor—Mrs. Craven's sharp eyes noted a row of photographs on the mantelpiece, and she rose from her chair to examine them. She picked out Floodmere's portraits from among the rest—there were three of them in as many different poses—and she read his character in the weak mouth, the large, dark eyes, and the elaborately tossed locks of hair, with the divination of a soothsayer. Mrs. Rowenna's vapid, pretty face did not appeal to her, but she liked the portrait of Mrs. Marshall and called to Kate to inquire who she was. She pointed also to Penhallow's picture, but made no allusion to the three photographs of the actor; nor did her daughter.

They were thus engaged when the door opened and Lady Clara entered, accompanied by Floodmere, at sight of whom Kate colored in a way that confirmed all that Telford had said and told her mother that she had not come any too soon.

"I met Mr. Floodmere down-stairs and told him to come right up and not bother to send up his name," cried Lady Clara, effusively. Her face was slightly rouged, and she was wearing one of the most grotesque of the season's hats, a gift from the man milliner whose wares she had described on her

Woman's Page the day before. Her gown, also the gift of an enterprising tradesman, was of striking design and brilliant hue, and even Kate, accustomed as she was to her friend's ornate style of dressing, glanced apprehensively at her mother, who was sitting perfectly still in her chair, her gaze alternating between Floodmere and Lady Clara, her immobile face showing no sign of her thoughts.

Meanwhile the actor was bending low over Kate's hand and murmuring, "You seem tired to-night, little one," when his eye fell upon the upright figure and tense, cold stare of Mrs. Craven. He recognized her at once from the portrait on the mantelpiece and came forward with both hands outstretched, crying: "And this is your mother! I have known of you so long that I feel almost like an old friend. My own dear mother passed away many years ago, and since then—well, I have always told our young friend here that she should be thankful that God has spared you to her so many years."

He used his voice with what seemed to Kate telling effect, and with a certain tricky catch in his last word that made her eyes dim. But, rather to her surprise, her mother remained unmoved and merely offered her hand in greeting, with the words, "I suppose you must be one of my daughter's new friends, but she hasn't seen fit to introduce us yet."

"This is Mr. Floodmere, mother," said Kate, nervously; "and this is Mrs. Grimmond," she added.

"Oh! Well, I'm glad to meet Mr. Floodmere," replied the old lady, "and Mrs. Grimmond, too. I've often heard of *you*, madam," she remarked, as she struggled out of the low easy-chair and grasped

Lady Clara's hand. "You've been very kind to my daughter, and I'm grateful to you."

The wise old soul had seen and recognized the kindness that shone through the rouge from under the brim of the absurd hat.

Floodmere, realizing with almost feminine intuition that he had somehow "missed his effect," took up his hat and, murmuring softly, "I'll leave you with your mother, Miss Craven; you will have much to say to one another," made a graceful exit. Soon afterward Lady Clara bade the visitor an affectionate good night and shut herself up in her own room, leaving mother and daughter together before the gas-log.

"So that's your Lady Clara, is it?" said Mrs. Craven, grimly. "Something like a singed cat, I should say—considerably better than she looks."

"Oh, Lady Clara's a dear, good soul!" exclaimed the other, warmly. "She's been a mighty good friend to me, too, even if she does wear such awful clothes. But that's a habit you can't break her of. Besides, you know, they don't dress in New York as they do in Graytown."

"That's quite evident," replied her mother, dryly. "And who's that Mr. Floodmere?" she continued, in quiet, even tones, without raising her eyes from their fixed contemplation of the gas-log.

"Why, that's a particular friend of Lady Clara's. He's a very well-known actor. I've known him quite a little while, and he seems very nice. Aren't you tired, mother? You can go to bed whenever you feel like it."

Mrs. Craven lifted her sternly questioning eyes suddenly to her daughter's face, and the latter's

gaze fell before them. "No, I'm not tired, and I've no idea of going to bed yet a while. Haven't you got a picture of that Mr. Telford among the rest? I gathered from your letters that you and he were quite friendly."

"We were until a short time ago. I've got one of his pictures, though, if you'd like to see it," replied Kate, eagerly, glad enough to turn her mother's thoughts from Floodmere.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Craven. "If you're not enough interested in him to keep his pictures on the mantel-shelf you can't expect me to be. I'm much more interested in that actor-man with the long hair and the rolling eyes who was here a few minutes ago. I see you've got three of his photographs, and yet you never mentioned him once in your letters. What about *him*, eh?"

"Why, there's nothing about him except that he's a good friend of mine—that is, in a business way. I've been doing his press work for him. He's a splendid actor, and so kind and thoughtful."

"Where's he acting now?" asked her mother, sharply.

"Well, he's resting just now, but he's going to have an engagement very soon, and if you stay here long enough—and I hope you will, mother dear—I'll take you to see him act."

"Thank you, but I've seen him act already, and I don't find him anywhere near as good as Jefferson or Booth, and I saw them both in Boston before you were born."

"Why, mother, when did you see Mr. Floodmere act?"

"About twenty minutes ago. Didn't you know

he was play-acting all the time he was bowing and scraping and rolling his eyes about and talking about his dear old mother? Well, if you didn't, it's about time your mother came on here to New York to take care of you. There's some one else you've got plenty of pictures of, and yet I don't remember that you ever mentioned her or any one like her in your letters home. What's *that* critter's name, I'd like to know?" she demanded, pointing to a picture of Roberta Rowenna in the costume of Portia, a part that she had never played but hoped to, believing the dress to become her.

"Why, that's Roberta Rowenna. She's an actress, and a very fine one, too. She will appear with Mr. Floodmere in their new play."

"So she's an actress, is she? Well, I certainly didn't think that a typewriter or a salesgirl would rig herself out like that. And what relation is she to this Floodmere?"

"No relation. She's been associated with him in a great many productions. Mother, you can't understand these things."

"Can't I?" demanded Mrs. Craven. "Well, there's a good many things I can understand, and this is one of them. I wasn't born yesterday, and even if I have spent all my life in small towns there's some things that you can't fool me with, and this actor business is one of them. Now, I want you to tell me how deep you've got into the mire."

"Mother, how can you make such an insinuation?" demanded Kate, in tones of horror.

"I don't insinuate anything!" rejoined the elder woman, stoutly. "I know enough to tell whether my own daughter has gone to the bad or not the

minute I clap eyes on her, but maybe it's just as well I came along at the time I did. How deep have you gone into this mess?"

"I don't know what you mean by a mess. I've been doing press work for these people ever since I lost my place on the *Megaphone*. I had to earn money somehow, and this was the first chance that offered."

"How much have you been earning?" asked Mrs. Craven.

"More than I ever did in my life before! In all, I've been taking in a hundred dollars a week."

"Been saving your money?"

"Yes, indeed; I'm living more economically than ever before."

"How much have you got now?"

"Oh, quite a little sum," said Kate, evasively.

"I asked you how much you had," said her mother, gazing at her steadfastly. "Tell me exactly how much money you've got in hand and in the bank. Bring out your check-book and let me see the balance on the stub. I hain't got much to my credit in the Graytown National, but I can tell to a penny just what I have got."

From her earliest infancy Kate had been taught to obey her mother implicitly, and this habit of a lifetime was too strong to be broken in a moment. She took the check-book from her desk; then, remembering Floodmere's name on the telltale stub, she returned it to its place.

"Give me that book!" said her mother, sternly, and it was placed in her outstretched hand. It was carefully balanced, and Mrs. Craven's keen eye lit at once on what she was looking for.

"Walter Floodmere, two hundred dollars! What's that for? Tickets to see him act?" she remarked. Then, turning back a few leaves, she added: "Walter Floodmere, three hundred dollars! He's had five hundred dollars within this last month, and all you've got left is one hundred and ten dollars and fifty cents. What did you let him have all that money for?"

"It was a—a business transaction between us. He's going to appear in a play, and I'm his press-agent, so I'm interested in it," said Kate, weakly, her face flushing under her mother's cold scrutiny.

"And how much does he pay you for getting his name in the papers, if that's what you mean by press work?" continued Mrs. Craven.

"Fifty dollars a week," replied her daughter.

"I don't see any deposit of that amount lately. What do you do with all that money?"

"Well, it costs something to live in New York, and—" began the other, but her mother interrupted her:

"You wrote me that you were getting fifty dollars a week from the *Megaphone*. You're not spending more than that, are you? Kate Craven, you've been a-lendin' money to that play-actor man, and you needn't try to deny it. Now, tell me just how much he owes you."

"Besides the five hundred dollars he owes me for seven weeks' work," was the reply.

"Eight hundred and fifty dollars!" said Mrs. Craven. Then she placed the check-book on the table and, looking her daughter steadily in the face, said very quietly: "I'm glad for my own peace of mind that I know you're a good girl, Kate; a good

girl, but a precious fool! I think I'm ready to go to bed now. I've had a heap of worry on my mind lately, and I'm pretty well tuckered out. Now you can do some of the worrying—more'n eight hundred dollars of it."

CHAPTER XXVI

KATE awoke the next morning with a weight of mental depression so unusual with her that it was fully a minute before she understood it. Then the events of the night before—Floodmere's brief call, and her mother's unexpected visit and illuminating talk—came crowding back into her mind. She had lain awake for hours and had come to the conclusion that in lending Floodmere so much money she had acted foolishly. But her faith in him and his theatrical venture was as strong as ever. In a very few weeks he would produce his play, and all New York would acclaim him the great actor that he was. And then the Staditorium—she had written so much about that scheme that she had actually come to believe in it herself—might become an accomplished fact. Then her mother would acknowledge that her daughter knew something about New York and the possibilities it had to offer.

In spite of her own experiences and Telford's enlightening conversation Kate still dwelt in the mirage that had appeared to her in her Graytown days.

Breakfast over—Kate brought her mother's to her in bed—Lady Clara put on a fearful and wonderful hat and departed for the office, and Kate seated herself at her desk and began her day's work. It was nearly eleven when her mother appeared,

not in a wrapper, but completely dressed, according to her lifelong custom.

"I declare," she remarked, cheerfully, "I hain't laid in bed as late as this since you were a baby. But I've had a grand sleep, and that's something I haven't had for some time. My mind's at rest now, and so will yours be when I've knocked a little sense into it."

At this moment the telephone rang, and Kate took the receiver in her hand. "Oh, Mrs. Rowenna!" she exclaimed, "wouldn't it be better for *me* to call on *you?* I'm all upset just now—"

"Tell her to come right up," commanded Mrs. Craven. "I just want to get one look at that woman! Is she any worse'n the other one that borrowed your money?"

Mrs. Rowenna burst into the room a moment later, a vision of beauty in her gorgeous clothes. She smiled sweetly on Mrs. Craven and wrung her cordially by the hand, saying: "You won't mind if I talk business to your daughter for a moment? No, don't go away; it's nothing very secret." Then, turning to Kate, she said: "I think we'll let up on the Staditorium for a while and perhaps take it up again later on. You see, I'm under pretty heavy expenses as it is, and, besides, I'm going South for a few weeks. There's no sign of an engagement for us till next season."

"But your new play!" exclaimed Kate. "Won't you have to begin rehearsals at once?"

"What play?" demanded the actress.

"Why, Mr. Floodmere told me that it was all arranged for you to star together—"

"Floodmere's a fool!" interrupted Roberta. "Do

you suppose I'd stop our press work with an engagement in sight? Don't pay any attention to him. He has visions! By the way, we owe you for the past two weeks, don't we?"

Kate was conscious that her mother's eyes were on her and that serious misgivings were creeping into her own mind. "I think it's seven weeks instead of two," she said, in a voice that quivered a little.

"Seven weeks!" screamed the actress. "Do you mean to tell me that Floodmere hasn't been paying you regularly every week?"

"He did at first, but then he fell behind, and I let the account run. I was sure he'd pay as soon as he had the money."

A moment of tense dramatic silence followed, during which Roberta, who was shrewd enough in her way, gazed steadfastly at Kate, while the latter returned her look with eyes of innocent, fearless truth, and Mrs. Craven glanced from one to the other, waiting for the next revelation. It was Roberta who broke the silence. "I might have known it," she said at last. "I ought to have known better, but I'm through now."

"What do you mean?" asked Kate.

"Oh, nothing, except that I've given Floodmere the money to pay you every Saturday until a fortnight ago!"

And Kate saw the Floodmere of her imagination —Floodmere the tearful, the high-minded, the talented — fade away, leaving only the manikin in faultless clothes, with tossed locks and rolling eyes. She sank back in her chair as the Staditorium, her own splendid contribution to the great mirage of

metropolitan life, came crashing down in ruins at her feet.

The telephone bell rang, and Mrs. Craven rose to her feet with alacrity. "I'll answer it!" she said, as she took the receiver in her hand. Then, in terms of geniality that sounded strangely forced and unnatural: "Come right up! My daughter will be glad to see you."

"Who is it, mother?" inquired Kate, timorously.

"Your friend Mr. Floodmere," replied the old lady.

"I'm glad he's taken this occasion to call," remarked Mrs. Rowenna, as she took a gold-tipped cigarette from a silver case and lit it, striking the match on the sole of her shoe. It was the first time that Mrs. Craven had ever seen a woman smoke, but in the midst of these tragic happenings, and with still more exciting events impending, she paid no attention to it. She had never met such a woman as this gorgeously clad Roberta before, and her cigarette seemed merely to complete the picture she presented of gay, loose, theatric life.

Floodmere entered the room with his silk hat in his hand and his light overcoat over his arm. His face wore a smile of ineffable tenderness, but that disappeared when he caught sight of Roberta looking at him through the smoke of her cigarette. There was something in the cold glare of her blue eyes that brought quick misgivings to his mind and a dreadful sense of sinking to his heart.

"Mr. Floodmere," said Roberta, wisely coming to the point at once so that he would not have time to cook up any plausible explanations or excuses, "what did you do with the money I gave you to pay Miss Craven?"

"The money—you gave me—" he stammered.

"Yes, the money! Fifty dollars a week till a fortnight ago! What did you do with it?"

"Why—why—I thought I paid it to her," he replied, turning a pitiful look of appeal on Kate.

"You never paid it to me," she said.

"And how about the five hundred you borrowed from her?" demanded Mrs. Craven, so fiercely that the actor's knees trembled and his face turned white.

"So he stung you for five hundred dollars more, did he?" said Roberta, between puffs. "How did you come to let him have it?"

"It was to buy costumes for the play that you and he were going to appear in!" said Kate, whose humiliation was now almost as great as Floodmere's.

"What play was that? I never heard of it until a few minutes ago. If I'm to have a part in it and you've got the money for the wardrobe, we're on the highroad to fortune!" And Roberta smiled grimly at him through the curling smoke.

"It's a splendid play!" cried the actor, grasping eagerly at the straw. "It had fine parts for us both. I felt sure that everything was all right, and so I permitted my friend—the dearest and purest and truest friend that a man ever had—to assist me in this enterprise. I was keeping it as a surprise for you, Roberta. This very day I had hoped to bring you the contract to sign. My God! I have slaved for you so unselfishly, and now—and now—" His voice broke in a sob; the tears coursed down his cheeks; he sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. A lump came into Kate's throat, for she was still under the spell of the actor-voice;

there was still some pity in her heart. But neither Mrs. Craven nor Roberta was moved by his tears.

"As soon as you are able to control yourself," said the latter, "we shall be glad to hear more about this splendid drama that you have secured for us. Are you rehearsing your part now or just crying?"

"Don't!" pleaded the actor. "Don't make it any harder to bear!" It was a relief to him, and to Kate as well, to hear the sharp ring of the telephone. Any interruption was welcome now, and another caller would give him a chance to escape. Hope rose within him as he saw Mrs. Craven take the receiver in her hand and heard her say: "Tell the lady to come right up. This is my daughter's day at home."

"Who is it, mother?" inquired Kate.

"One of your new friends. I never heard her name before, but I'll be glad to meet her. The more the merrier, this fine morning."

Floodmere raised his head. "If you have friends coming I had better go away and come another time, perhaps?" he suggested, with wistful eagerness.

"Stay right where you are!" retorted Mrs. Craven, who had stationed herself before the door. "I enjoy your acting so much that I can't bear to let you go."

A brief silence followed, broken only by the wails of the actor and Mrs. Rowenna's sarcastic comments. Then the bell rang, and Mrs. Craven opened the door and extended a cordial hand to the visitor.

"Come right in, Mrs. Floodmere," she said, amiably. "You'll find some particular friends of yours waiting for you."

The new-comer was an overdressed blonde woman of forty with traces of former beauty in the daintily colored face from which many of the lines and wrinkles that speak of trouble and anxiety had been eliminated by massage. That she intended her visit to be one of stately ceremony was made apparent by her elaborate costume and the flamboyant hat that did double duty in attracting attention and shielding her face from too searching scrutiny. Of the kind known as "actor-chasers," she had succumbed to the magic of Floodmere's voice, rolling eyes, and creased trousers five years before; had paved the way to acquaintanceship with flowers and adoring letters and—the rest had been easy. After six months of happiness and two years of tempestuous misery, during which he had consumed half of her fortune in disastrous starring ventures, he had left her for Roberta Rowenna, and his wife had camped on the latter's trail ever since in the hope of winning him back.

Women of Mrs. Floodmere's type are a potent influence in theatrical affairs. They fill the houses at matinées, buy photographs of players, invite them to call on them, and are not infrequently led into intimacies that are followed by years of bitter regret. They are the principal support of bad actors of the Floodmere type, who, ignorant of the art of the stage, make their appeal through a bag of meretricious tricks, chiefly of the eye and voice.

In the upper grades of society the woman of this type entertains and frequently helps to support "interesting" men who *do* things—paint, sing, write, or act; and idolizes those "intellectual actors" who are artistically quite as bad as the Floodmeres

and even more pretentious. In the glossary of such a woman the terms "interesting" and "doing things" are not applicable to the man who irrigates a great desert or builds a bridge across the East River or a tunnel under the Hudson. Not one of these achievements but ranks lower in her estimation than the art of playing badly on the flute.

Taken collectively, the Mrs. Floodmeres and their counterparts of the higher grade, the "interesting" men, and the bad actors of the hair-and-eye school, as well as those of the equally worthless and tricky "intellectual" type, loom large in the great mirage of metropolitan life that is beholden by travelers from afar off.

As Mrs. Floodmere entered the room both Floodmere and Roberta started in surprise, but Kate, not comprehending who she was, rose to greet her.

"Did you wish to see me?" she inquired, politely.

"I certainly do," replied the visitor, and then stopped short as her eyes fell upon Floodmere and Mrs. Rowenna. "So you're here, too, are you?" she cried, in a shrill voice, pointing to the latter. Then, turning a look of withering scorn on the actor, she added, "I was looking for you, too, and now I've got you both dead to rights."

Roberta recovered herself quickly and said: "If it's only Mr. Floodmere you want, you can have him and welcome. I was afraid you were going to lay claim to some article of value, and I haven't got many of them left—thanks to him."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Floodmere, in tones of bitter irony, "this other lady would object to letting him go? I realize, of course, that both of you are entitled

to first consideration. I'm nothing but his wife, so of course I don't count."

"His wife!" exclaimed Kate, overwhelmed by a sudden realization of her own supreme folly.

"Yes, his wife!" replied Mrs. Floodmere. "I suppose he never thought it worth while to mention such a little encumbrance as that?"

"He never told me he was married," said Kate, piteously.

"No!" snapped the other; "that's a subject he seldom mentions when he's making love to other women."

"He never made love to me!" exclaimed Kate, indignantly.

"God knows that she speaks the truth!" said Floodmere, turning on the tap from his tank of "repressed emotion."

His wife sniffed contemptuously and then turned to Mrs. Rowenna, who had recovered her composure and was lighting a fresh cigarette. "I suppose you didn't know he had a wife, either?"

"If you're his wife, why don't you take him away with you?" she asked, placidly. "I'm sure I don't want him, and I don't think anybody else does, either. Go on and take him away as soon as ever you please."

"Thank you! I don't want any of *your* leavings. If he ain't good enough for a common hussy he ain't good enough for me. You can have him, and welcome!"

Mrs. Rowenna suddenly sat bolt upright in her chair. "Did you say 'common hussy' to me?" she demanded, in a voice of fierce menace.

"I certainly did," retorted the actor's wife, a

belligerent fire in her eye that caused the other to quail. "What did you think I said?"

"Good Gawd!" moaned Roberta, piteously. "What would my dear old mother have said if she could have lived to hear that?"

"Like as not she'd say she'd known it herself all along!" said Mrs. Floodmere; and then, as Roberta buried her face in her hands, she turned to Kate. "Well, young woman, perhaps you'd like to keep this precious husband of mine? Nobody else seems to want him."

"You forget, madam," said Kate, with dignity, "that I have only known your husband in a business way, and—"

"Business!" snorted the other. "He's been calling on you every afternoon for the last six weeks! I suppose you'll tell me he was talking business to you all that time! What sort of business was it, I'd like to ask—if it's not impertinent? Of course, I'm only his lawful wedded wife, so I don't want to butt in on any little intimacies he may have with you other ladies."

During this exciting colloquy no one had paid the slightest attention to Mrs. Craven, who had remained in the background quietly listening and observing. Now she lifted her voice for the first time. "The sort of business he had was borrowing money from her," she remarked, in even tones.

"Is that all he got from you?" asked Mrs. Floodmere. "Why didn't you let him have your jewels, too?"

"Because she hasn't any," replied Mrs. Craven.

"That's a perfectly good reason. It's a pity she

hadn't a necklace, so he could take it out to get mended the same as he did mine."

It was Roberta who broke in now, and her words were addressed to Kate Craven, and in the raucous tones that she employed when angry. "And so he's been making love to you, too, has he? And all the time you were pretending to be my friend and getting money out of me for my press work you were trying to win Walter away from me. Gawd! Ain't it enough to have my child taken away from me and my home broken up, but you must rob me of the man I love—the only man I ever did love?"

She sank back in her chair and burst into a fit of hysterical weeping. Floodmere sprang to her side and placed his arms about her as if to protect her from assault.

"Attack me as you will!" he cried, rolling his eyes about the room in a splendid frenzy; "strike me, now that I'm down, but spare her!" He glared fiercely at both Mrs. Craven and her daughter, but was careful to avoid the angry gaze of his wife.

"Save me, darling! Save me from that woman!" sobbed Roberta, clinging to him. "Take me away from this dreadful place."

Floodmere raised the sobbing woman to her feet and drew his arm affectionately about her waist. Always a firm believer in the great theatrical value of a good exit, he saw a chance for one now, and so, clutching his hat and overcoat with his left hand, he propelled Roberta gently toward the door. "Calm yourself," he murmured. "You are overwrought now, but you will be better once you gain the fresh air. A ride through the Park will do you a world of good."

Roberta raised her tear-stained face and glared at Kate. "Viper!" she hissed. "I little thought that you would be the one to violate the sanctity of my home. But you have failed. He belongs to me! To me! Do you hear that—ingrate that you are?"

Still gently leading the actress, Floodmere had almost reached the door when his wife threw herself before the retreating pair with an hysterical shriek. "Would you rob me of my husband before my very eyes? Walter! Walter! Do you hear me, Walter? I say you shall not go with that woman!"

"For God's sake, don't make a scene! Have some consideration for these ladies," implored the actor. "Let me take her home, and we will meet later. It will all come out right in the end."

"You sha'n't leave this flat with that creature in your arms!" sobbed the stricken wife, and then Mrs. Craven flung open the door and exclaimed in tones that said she was not to be trifled with:

"Get out of here, every one of you miserable critters, and don't one of you ever show your face here again!"

"For God's sake, don't let her make a scene! Keep her till we can get out of the building!" begged Floodmere, as he skipped across the threshold, dragging Roberta with him.

"I'll give you just two minutes," replied Mrs. Craven, as she closed the door behind him and stood guard before it. "At the end of that time," she added, addressing Mrs. Floodmere, "you'll go, too; and, mind you, don't make a speck of noise till you get outside the house! Then you can holler and yell all you've a mind to."

After the last of the trio of "critters" had de-

parted the old lady threw open all the windows, saying, "It's high time we let some fresh air into this room!" It was all the comment she made. None other was needed. Another of the walls of the great mirage had crumbled, and Kate sat gazing with amazed eyes at the dark clouds of reality beyond.

CHAPTER XXVII

BARSHFIELD'S arrival at the *Megaphone* office was an episode of almost sensational theatricalism. He had been careful not to permit the moment of his sailing to reach the ears of any one save Macy and Vanderlip, knowing well that motives of self-interest would prevent them from spreading the tidings. In Park Row special information of this sort is something more than a mere secret. It is a tangible asset that may be converted into a weapon of offense or defense.

Consequently the sudden appearance of Majesty at the door of his own private office was rendered doubly spectacular by the fact that he found Tops and the smallest of the office-boys shooting craps in the hall. While the dean of the messengers' corps fumbled with trembling fingers at the lock of the throne-room door his opponent gathered the pennies from the floor and sped away to the city-room, gasping out the news as he ran: "De boss is back!"

Barshfield arrived at twelve o'clock, or "high noon," as it is known in the society reporter's lexicon, and until three remained in close consultation, first with Vanderlip, then with Macy, then with both. Meanwhile Tops sat outside the door wiping the sweat of apprehension from his brow and leaping from his seat at every sound of the bell. And the

city-room held its breath while those clothed with a little brief authority—authority is seldom anything else in Park Row—simulated exuberant activity and close attention to business. He to whom the duties of city editor had been delegated by Macy did his best to confirm the popular belief that his coat-tails were fitted with an appliance that kept them extended horizontally while their possessor was in motion. The only man in the entire office who remained in ignorance of the day's stupendous happening was Penfield, whose isolation from his fellow-workers was so complete that no one even thought of telling him. Nor were there wanting those who hoped that his enlightenment would take the form of disaster.

At one o'clock Penfield sallied forth to luncheon at the house of Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, who had just had some new photographs taken. Tops cast an evil eye upon him as he passed, a rose in his buttonhole, his hat slightly cocked on one side, his cane swinging gaily as he walked.

"There's a guy that won't be in the movies much longer," remarked the senior office-boy to his assistant.

"Nor in the talkies neither," rejoined the other, with prophetic voice.

At half past three Penfield returned, still jaunty and debonaire, and humming a blithe tune as he swung his cane. He bore with him one of his hostess's latest photographs, together with memoranda for an article, which he proposed to write himself, about her most recent activities on behalf of the downtrodden of her sex, and in which she was to figure as the "Joan of Arc" of something or other.

"De boss wants to see you right away in his office; he's sent for you tree times," said the boy, in his habitually sullen tone.

"What boss? I didn't know I had one," replied the Sunday editor, as he seated himself at his desk. "If it's Mr. Vanderlip, you can tell him that I shall be glad to see him here any time between now and five o'clock," he added, complacently.

"'Tain't Mr. Vanderlip; it's Mr. Barshfield," said the boy, eying him sharply.

"Mr. Barshfield? Mr. Barshfield's in Paris!" exclaimed Penfield, starting from his seat and fixing his dead black eyes on the boy's face.

The other returned his glance, unabashed, and said doggedly: "Mebbe he come over in a flyin'-machine. Anyway, he's in his office now. Tops seen him when he come in."

The Sunday editor started at once, and the boy grinned as he saw him take the flower from his buttonhole and cast it on the floor. Two minutes later the city-room knew that he had been sent for, and wide and deep were the speculations as to his fate, for it was commonly known that Vanderlip and Macy had long since marked him for destruction.

Before summoning Penfield the owner of the *Megaphone* had sent for that trusty barometer of business, the circulation manager, and obtained from him an exact statement of the condition of the Sunday issue. The figures showed a steady decrease in sales from the moment that Penfield assumed control. And as the quiet little old Irishman who serves as high priest at the altar where Barshfield prostrates himself before the great god Circulation gave his damning testimony he knew from the look

in his employer's face that Penfield's doom was sealed. And his heart became glad.

Barshfield did not discharge Penfield from his employ. He did something that was far worse. He relieved him of the responsibility of the Sunday issue and bade him return to the city department and report to Mr. Macy. It was all done quickly and with the cold, punctilious courtesy that marks Barshfield's most bitter and dangerous moods. Penfield experienced a shock as sharp and sudden as if he had lost his head instead of his job. At his employer's polite nod of dismissal he left the room without a word. Indeed, it never occurred to him to utter a word of remonstrance or explanation or to crave mercy. As well expect a head to rear itself above the edge of the basket and plead with the executioner to be put back again on the bleeding trunk.

As he made his way through the hall to his own office he was conscious of the sharp scrutiny of many pairs of eyes. He saw malevolence in the look that Tops gave him—Tops, the crap-shooter, whose own head had barely escaped the block!—and as he passed the open door of the city-room it seemed to his disordered fancy that myriad heads were raised to behold him in the moment of his disgrace. Everywhere he could see mocking eyes and sneering faces. Did the whole office know what had happened? Nonsense! It was only his imagination. And yet when he entered his own office his boy said, "Do you want me to help move your things, Mr. Penfield?"

The tidings had indeed spread with marvelous celerity. Tops, with his highly trained ear at the

keyhole, had given the word to his junior, and the latter had darted off to carry the news throughout the building.

For some time Penfield sat in his revolving-chair before his handsome roll-top desk, trying to reconstruct himself under the conditions that had been so unexpectedly forced upon him. His whole life in New York seemed to sweep past him as he sat there. He saw himself trudging the pavements for the first time, a raw country reporter on his way to the *Megaphone* building. Step by step he went over in memory his rapid rise to power in Park Row and what he still fondly imagined was social position. Surely it was something for this country reporter of yesterday to be now on cordial terms with such distinguished women as Carolyn Smithers and Mrs. Chilton-Smythe? "At least," he muttered to himself, "that is something they can't take away from me—my social position."

He remembered Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's portrait and resolved that he would keep it himself. Mr. Barshfield would soon learn that it was not every one who could secure the privilege of reproducing the latest photograph of such a distinguished social leader.

A timid knock on the door aroused him from his reverie, and Lady Clara came toward him with both hands outstretched and tears of sympathy in her kindly eyes. Poor Lady Clara, whom he had always despised until he could make use of her, was the only friend he had left. Not even the fact that he was no longer able to do her favors could make this remarkable woman forget what she had received at his hands.

"Oh, Mr. Penfield!" she exclaimed, as she took both his limp hands in hers. "I've just heard the news, and I can't tell you how sorry I am! It was you who gave me my job and kept it for me, and now anything that I've got is yours."

For almost the first time in his life Penfield was deeply touched. The tears came into his eyes—those hard, brassy, deep black eyes that Mrs. Craven had always hated—and he drew Lady Clara toward him and gently kissed her forehead.

Penfield having been disposed of, the next question that presented itself to Barshfield for consideration was that of a suitable successor. Every one of the well-known figureheads of Park Row was suggested in turn by his two henchmen, and yet he continued to shake his head thoughtfully. At six o'clock he glanced at his watch and rose to go. "We can leave it till next week," he said, "but we ought to have some clever woman to look after the fashions and all that. Is there any one on the staff that can do it?"

At this moment Macy remembered Kate Craven, who had been a sort of thorn in the side of his conscience ever since he had felt compelled to sacrifice her to the demands of office politics.

"Suppose we get Miss Craven back again," he suggested.

"Why, I thought she was so thick with Penfield—and on the quiet, too!" said Barshfield, with a damning suspicion of something underhand—he did not know exactly what.

"You needn't be afraid on that score," rejoined the city editor. "She's never forgiven him for throwing her down as he did. She's a very clever little woman, and I've found out that a great many of

the ideas that Penfield got the credit for were really hers."

"Well, have her come here to-morrow afternoon," were Barshfield's parting words.

The events described in this chapter took place on the day after the sensational exit from Kate Craven's life of Walter Floodmere. It was Lady Clara who brought the news to the flat, coming home an hour earlier than usual and carrying also a budget of office comment and speculation.

"It seems that his death-warrant was signed and sealed long ago, and I was the only one that never suspected it!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "Of course I knew that Macy and Vanderlip had it in for him ever since the boss began taking notice of him, but I'd no idea they'd get the knife into him as quick as they have. I supposed he was still sitting among the mighty on the top steps of the throne. How else would he be able to pay you fifty bones a week just for giving him ideas and writing one or two stories? Does that go on, or do you think your head will fall, too?"

"I think my head must have fallen when his did, though I didn't feel the knife parting the vertebræ," answered Kate, in a voice of calm despair. Her financial support had been swept from under her—vanished in company with the Staditorium and the money she had lent to Floodmere.

"I declare that's too bad," said Lady Clara, the ready tears of sympathy gathering in her eyes. "I'd give anything to have you back on my page, but the Lord only knows how long I'm going to hold my own job. Everybody's sitting tight and holding on to their desks, and Dan Farley tells me

it looks like a general shake-up. He's been through enough of them to know when he sees one coming."

"On what grounds did Mr. Barshfield discharge Penfield?" asked Kate.

"His special features were no good, and the circulation went down. He had a lot of good woman's stuff, but somehow it didn't seem to go. I gave him a few ideas myself, but he wasn't able to do anything with them. They tell me that lots of women stopped taking the *Megaphone* because they didn't like his women's features."

"Thank you," remarked Kate; "that's the first good news I've heard to-day. I thought some of those features would do the business."

There was a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes that Lady Clara did not understand. But after the fashion-writer had retired to her room to "put on something loose" Mrs. Craven asked her daughter what she had meant, and Kate promptly explained the manner in which she had contributed to Penfield's downfall by offering suggestions that she knew were worse than worthless and would pave the way to his ruin. "I did it because I wanted to get even with him for what he did to me," she said, as she brought her tale of just vengeance to a close. "And by doing it I've learned something that may come in handy one of these days. I've learned that women don't read this stuff that goes into the women's pages. They hate it just as much as I did while I was writing it. But I got paid for writing it, and they pay for the privilege of reading it."

For a moment Mrs. Craven regarded her daughter thoughtfully. "I'm glad you've learned something since you came to New York, even if it's nothing

more than what I told you when you came away," she said, at last. "And I'm more than glad that you had a hand in putting that miserable critter Penfield where he belongs. It makes my mind a little easier to think of leaving you here to shift for yourself. I suppose you'd rather stop here and go along with your career, as you call it, than go back to Graytown with me?"

"I'll have to stay, mother, until my money gives out," replied Kate. "I don't feel like owning myself beaten just because I've trusted the wrong people. I can hang on for a little while longer and do the best I can. Very likely something will turn up. Anyway, I've got an education since I came here, but it's cost me a pretty penny."

"Education usually does come high, especially to those who don't know enough to take it when it's offered them for nothing," said the elder woman. "Well, you've had your education, and I'm willing to pay for it out of the money I've been putting aside for you, dollar by dollar, ever since you were born. There's pretty nigh a thousand dollars to your credit in the Graytown bank, and you can draw on it if you need to. That's what it was put there for—to pay for your education."

A sudden realization of the years of love and self-sacrifice that lay behind this gift stirred Kate Craven's soul to its utmost depths. What must it have meant to this taciturn, undemonstrative woman to put away such a sum, bit by bit, without permitting her daughter to even guess of its existence! How could she ever repay her? And yet this new debt was nothing in comparison with what she owed for the long years of watchful care, of wise counsel, of

deep love. For the first time in her life she began to have an idea of the far-reaching power of that which, more than anything else, shapes human destinies. She could not utter a word. No mere words would express what she felt at this supreme moment. She went to her mother, seated herself in her lap, threw her arms about her neck, and buried her face in her bosom. Her whole form was shaken with her tempestuous sobbing.

"There, there, darling," crooned her mother, soothingly, remembering how Kate had often thrown herself into her arms in just this way and sobbed out her childish woes. There were tears now on the wrinkled cheeks as well as on the smooth ones. Mother and daughter had come together again in mutual love and confidence, never to be parted. Lady Clara, opening her door, saw them thus engaged and went quickly back into her room.

While the three women were dining a boy appeared with Mr. Macy's card on which was penciled a request that Kate would give him a few moments' private conversation. Greatly wondering, she went down and saw him for the first time since he had dismissed her from the paper. And if his visit had surprised her, how much greater her amazement when the city editor said: "How would you like to come back to the *Megaphone*, Miss Craven? I think I can arrange it for you."

"I don't know; I never thought of such a thing," she faltered.

"I was speaking about you to Mr. Barshfield to-day," continued Macy, "and if you will come down to the office to-morrow afternoon I will see what can be done. I have always felt that an in-

justice was done you and I shall be very glad to do anything in my power to make things right. That is why I have come to see you instead of writing or trying to talk to you over the telephone. If you have any reason for not wishing to come please tell me now."

All this was the truth, but not all of the truth. Macy was sincere in his wish to right a wrong, but he was also anxious to attach Kate to his own service, believing her capable of unswerving loyalty and deep gratitude.

"I understand," said Kate, after a moment's hesitation, "that Mr. Penfield has been discharged."

"Discharged!" exclaimed Macy. "Not at all! He has merely been transferred from the Sunday to the city department."

"What do you think will be the next step in the line of promotion?" inquired Kate, with a twinkle in her eye that brought an answering grin to the other's face.

He made no further reply to her inquiry, but went on to explain the work required of her and to exact her promise to call the following day, a promise she gave reluctantly and only through sheer necessity. The thought of taking up her old work on the Woman's Page was repellant to her. The great mirage that had lured her to the city had dissolved and she was beginning to see clearly the real life of the town. Lady Clara still believed in what she was doing. Her eyes would never behold the truth. But to go on day after day, presenting false views of life, keeping alive the illusion of the mirage and perhaps tempting thousands of young men and women to hurry on toward the city of mists and dreams—how could she possibly do it?

All this passed through Kate's mind after Macy had gone and while she was ascending in the elevator to her own rooms. She said nothing to either her mother or Lady Clara of the purport of the city editor's call, but that night after the others had gone to bed she sat brooding before the gas-log. Reasons why she should not accept Macy's offer came crowding in upon her thick and fast, and one of those that thrust itself upon her mind with tireless persistency was Telford. She did not mind encountering Penfield, whom but a few months ago she had prayed that she might never see again, but she could not bear the thought of meeting the man who had told her the plain truth. She had already banished Floodmere, if not from her mind, at least from her heart, but Telford's outspoken contempt for him still rankled in her memory. For Kate Craven was, after all, essentially feminine in her emotions and mental make-up.

Still brooding, she reached the point where she resolved that under no circumstances would she accept Macy's offer, and then the money necessity rose up like a stone wall before her eyes and shut out all minor considerations from her sight. After all, there would be no harm in going to see Barshfield and hearing what he had to say; and with this resolve in her mind she made up the cot on which she slept during her mother's visit and went to bed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

NEWS of the fall of Penfield swept through the great whispering-gallery of Park Row. Borne from mouth to mouth it penetrated every newspaper office and saloon. It startled the Brasserie of Hard Times from its long afternoon lethargy between drinks and set the tongues to buzzing in every hen-coop. Prominent journalists who seldom deigned to cross the threshold of the Brasserie now hurried to that unequaled center of intelligence and "bought" recklessly that they might not only learn the news, but also gather the results of speculative surmise, a school of imaginative thought in which the frequenters of the place excel. The politicians of the different offices—each staff has its Macy and its Vanderlip—looked grave and wondered where the deposed favorite would seek employment. More than one brain, wise in political trickery, was busy that afternoon with schemes to defeat any project he might entertain. To more than one newspaper-owner was imparted a hint of this man's power for evil.

For Penfield had acquired a great reputation as an office politician of extraordinary cunning, largely based on the fact that Macy and Vanderlip had been forced to make common cause against him. As a matter of fact, he was not a politician, but a sycophant seeking only to ingratiate himself with those above

him and too ignorant in the ways of the world to realize the value of a loyal following among his equals and those beneath him. And now, at the moment when his name was on every tongue in Park Row, he was sitting before his roll-top desk, stunned by the sudden news of his fall, and with none, save poor Lady Clara, to offer a word of regret or sympathy. As the shadows of night descended on him his sense of loneliness, of utter isolation from the little world in which he had but an hour before regarded himself as a personage of no small importance, came upon him with crushing force. For almost the first time in his life the value of human love and companionship loomed large in his mind. It would have lifted a weight from his load of grief and mortification had the office-boy come in to say that he was sorry he was going.

It was in a much softened mood that he addressed himself to the last official act of his reign. He wrote a short letter to Kate, inclosing his check for a full week's salary and thanking her for the loyal zeal that she had shown him. "My head has been cut off," he said, "and, of course, yours falls, too, but I sha'n't forget what I owe you. Nor shall I ever forgive myself for not playing fair with you. Some day, perhaps, I shall have a chance to prove to you that I mean what I say."

It was the least selfish letter that Kate had ever received from him, and the tears sprang to her eyes as she read it carefully through a second time. There was something like remorse in her heart, too, as she remembered how she had helped to bring about his downfall.

It was not until long after dark that he closed his

desk and made his way out into the street. As he walked slowly up Broadway there came to him the comforting reflection that at least he was not in danger of starvation, as he had banked more than two thousand dollars from his salary and there was at least a hundred and fifty more in his pocket. And yet he was almost friendless in the city that had yielded him such a good living. Suddenly there rose up in his mind the memory of the survivor of another shipwreck finding the gold coins cast upon the beach and realizing their utter worthlessness to him in his sorry plight. And he saw the same castaway's face shining with joy as he found the print of a naked human foot on the sands of his desert island. If he himself could only find the footprint of a faithful Man Friday in the desert he was traversing to-night!

A well-worn simile, perhaps, but let us not forget that *Robinson Crusoe* was one of the few great books that Penfield had ever read.

Kate Craven arrived at the *Megaphone* office at the appointed hour and was cordially received by Macy, who quickly ushered her into the royal presence and then quietly withdrew. The noiseless footfall is one of the signs by which an adroit office politician may always be known.

Barshfield greeted her with the courtesy for which he has always been famed, drew up a chair for her, and said: "I have been hoping, Miss Craven, that you would care to come back to us. There's plenty of work for you on the Sunday page, the sort of work that you do very well."

"What sort of work?" she asked, timidly.

"Just the sort that you did before—the usual

woman's stuff. We intend to run two or three pages of it on Sunday."

"I'm afraid I can't do any more woman's stuff," she replied, with a shake of her pretty head that caught Barshfield's eye and for a moment enchained his volatile fancy.

"Why not?" he inquired, pleasantly. "Not so very long ago you were doing it very well."

"That was because I believed in it. I don't any more, and I'm afraid it would be impossible for me to do it now. If there is any other sort of work for me I should be glad to try it, for I need the money."

The proprietor of the *Megaphone* gazed in wonder at the girl who thought she could no longer write woman's stuff. In all the years of his ownership he had never met any one who did not feel qualified to turn out this favorite brand of Park Row fiction in quantities to suit the purchaser. If a farmer had confessed to him his inability to raise potatoes his surprise would not have been greater. For a moment that seemed to Kate interminably long he sat with his keen eyes fixed upon this unique specimen of her sex.

"I wish you would tell me exactly what you mean," he said at last, and there was a note of kindly encouragement in his words that gave her courage to speak her mind.

"I think the system is all wrong," she replied. "I'm quite sure that what is called 'woman's stuff' does not appeal to the average woman. Of course I know that I'm going against all newspaper tradition and it probably sounds conceited, but I have good reason to know that I am right. I proved it at the expense of the *Megaphone*, and I think it only fair

that I should confess the part I played in bringing about Mr. Penfield's downfall."

She paused a moment, her face flushed and her eyes fixed on the floor. It was awkward to have to tell the story of her treachery, but since her mother's arrival the conscience that she had inherited from her New England ancestry had begun to trouble her and she resolved that she would not re-enter Barshfield's employ without making a clean breast of everything. With a kindly word and a nod he bade her continue.

"As you probably know," she went on, raising her clear, truthful eyes and looking him squarely in the face, "Mr. Penfield went back on me at the very moment when he ought to have shown himself my friend. He saved himself, but I was discharged, and I can tell you I didn't feel very pleasantly toward him. But I bided my time, and before long he found out that he needed me to help him, as I always had, ever since the days when he was working on a country paper in our old home town. He wanted ideas for the Sunday paper and he was willing to pay for them. That was my chance to get even. I'm almost ashamed to tell it, but I deliberately sent in every idea I could think of that would hurt the circulation. It was woman's stuff he said he wanted, and I gave it to him. I just picked out everything I could think of that would make women angry. I suppose you saw that series about the female relatives of the President? Well, that was my idea. Nothing makes the average woman madder than to see the President's relatives blossom out like royal princesses and preside at meetings and visit the night court and express their opinions on all sorts of topics."

"But," interrupted Barshfield, "women are surely interested in the doings of other women! If not, there would be no use in running a page for their especial benefit."

"They're interested in real public women like actresses and authors, but not in those who were nobodies yesterday and will be nobodies again at the end of four years."

"How about society women? Are they interested in them?" inquired Barshfield.

"Yes, if they're rich, but not otherwise," answered Kate. "That's another thing I was going to tell you about. You may have noticed those stories about society leaders who made their own hats? Well, I always contrived to show that they lived in small flats and were obliged to economize. Every woman turned up her nose at the idea of a society leader who was obliged to economize. No woman can really lead society in a hat of her own making. She must buy at least one a week and pay a hundred dollars apiece for them. A really interesting series of articles could be made about society leaders who never wear the same dress or the same hat twice."

Kate stopped short in her discourse, appalled at the freedom of her speech and amazed at the deep interest visible in the face of Barshfield. Seldom in all his experience as a Park Row autocrat had one of his subjects talked to him as truthfully and frankly as this pretty little pawn who had been so ruthlessly swept from the board as a warning to others. She was teaching him something about his own business now and he was an apt pupil, not only absorbing everything she told him, but eager for more.

"And how about these women who head great movements in behalf of their sex?" he inquired. "Are they interesting to other women?"

"Certainly, if they have plenty of new hats and things," replied Kate, confidently.

Barshfield smiled as he recalled her own description of the Chilton-Smythe toque at the Chicago convention, and the fashion that it had set. He nodded encouragingly to his young instructor, and she went on.

"My mother always told me that the early movement in favor of what was then called 'Women's Rights' was killed by the bloomers. That hideous style of dress became identified with the cause—in which she herself always believed—and aroused the ridicule of men and the antipathy of women. The Suffragist of to-day is, generally speaking, a well-dressed woman, and that is one reason why the cause is gaining ground. Any woman's movement that falls into the hands of a lot of frumps is sure to die a quick death. It's not so much the brain as it is the hat that shelters it that commands the confidence of women—that is to say, of the women who pore over fashion columns."

"Then you don't believe in appealing to women's brains?" inquired Barshfield.

"I certainly do," replied Kate, promptly, "but not on the society page. That should be run for the believers in hats. Outside of that I think that what we call 'woman's stuff' should be addressed to intelligent women, and there are more of them than the Sunday editors have any idea of. Moreover, there is such a thing as the feminine point of view, which is quite different from that of a man's, and I think it

would pay some newspaper to take cognizance of it. For example, women are the great buyers of books, especially fiction, and their tastes are not those of men. A weekly article on current fiction written by a woman who is in thorough sympathy with her sex would interest women enormously. It would help the sale of books, too, and consequently bring advertising. I think a theatrical story run on the same plan would pay well, too."

"What about the recipes and dress-patterns?" inquired Barshfield.

"That reminds me that I have another confession to make," replied Kate. "You will notice that in the daily bill of fare I always saved on the luncheon, making it as cheap and nasty as possible. That is the meal that the women and children eat alone, as a rule, and women don't like the idea of eating scraps whenever the man of the house is away. As to the fashions, I always tried to show how little a woman could dress on, and that notion is decidedly unpopular with my sex. It gives their husbands a chance to grumble at their bills. In short, I did everything I could to induce women to stop the *Megaphone* and take some other Sunday paper in its stead. I'm half ashamed of it now, especially if you have lost by it, but I'd been treated very badly and I wanted to get even, just as if I'd been a man. We women are supposed to turn the other cheek or take it out in crying, but once in a while the worm will turn. Then that series showing how money could be saved in every family by dressing the children poorly and sending them to the public schools. Women don't want to have their children, whom they believe to be the most wonderful in the world,

brought down to the common level and sent to schools where they'll learn bad language. The minute the women begin to hide the paper for fear their husbands will see it the circulation will begin to run down."

For a few moments the owner of the *Megaphone* sat lost in thought. Never before had ideas so radically opposed to the most revered traditions of Park Row been presented to him. In all his endeavors to impart zest and novelty to his Woman's Page it had never occurred either to himself or to any of his satellites to try an infusion of wit or some other form of brain-power. Kate Craven's outspoken words had made a deep impression on him. She had evidently been a close observer during her term of apprenticeship in his office. Could it be that her theories were right? And had she the ability to put them into practical form? There was something in her that not only pleased his eye—always a coldly critical one where women were concerned—but also inspired his confidence. It might be that in her he had made a good "find" of the sort that newspaper-owners are always looking for—some one whose brains could make the fires under his cook-shop burn with a brighter glow. At any rate, the experiment was worth trying.

"How would you like to try your hand at this unusual work of appealing to the feminine brain?" he said at last.

"I should like it very much," replied Kate, promptly, "but please don't ask me to do the sort of thing I did before. I should fail if I tried to do it, now that I've got my eyes open."

An arrangement was quickly made between the

two, and then Barshfield courteously opened the door for Kate and proceeded to Vanderlip's room, where he found his two lieutenants in quiet, earnest communion. Both hastened to signify their hearty approval of his act, and then, with a significant look at his associate, Vanderlip remarked in his gentle voice that he thought the time had come for a substantial recognition on the part of their employer of the services that they had rendered him during long years of zeal, discretion, and loyalty.

Before replying the owner of the *Megaphone* took off his glasses, polished them carefully and replaced them on his nose, thus gaining a moment for rapid thought, for he knew at once that his prime ministers, whom he had for years "played off," the one against the other, with marvelous skill, had united to wrest from his grasp the scepter of absolute authority. Then he turned a look of steely, searching inquiry on the face of each and asked them what they wanted.

"More money," said Vanderlip, laconically.

Barshfield always met important crises in his affairs with a cigarette between his lips, believing that the curling smoke helped to obscure his features, though it did not in the least impair his own vision. He lighted one now and puffed at it before saying in clear, impassive tones: "I was not aware that I had treated you in a niggardly manner. Both of you have drawn salaries which I believe are larger than those paid in other offices for work similar to yours."

"Quite true," said Vanderlip, the smooth-spoken. "Your treatment of us in the past leaves us nothing to complain of. It is the future that we are thinking of now. The paper is growing in circulation, influ-

ence, and profits and our responsibilities are growing, too, so it seems—"

"What salaries do you want?" demanded Barshfield, and there was a metallic ring in his voice that did not pass unnoticed.

"Our salaries are quite fair," said Macy. "We only thought that the time had come for an alotment of a few more shares of the stock."

The *Megaphone* is published by a stock company of one thousand shares, of which each of the prime ministers held two for legal reasons. It was their belief—gently expressed by Vanderlip—that these holdings should be increased to the extent of a hundred shares apiece. Barshfield's face wore its usual inscrutable mask as he listened. The voice that he heard was of velvet, but the hands that he felt at his throat were of tempered steel. It had come upon him at last—that which his father had warned him against and of which he had lived in almost daily expectation ever since he ascended the throne. He remembered now how the feudal barons compelled King John to grant the Magna Charta. A faint smile, which puzzled the two men, watching him narrowly to read the thoughts behind those cold eyes, flitted across his face as the fantastic thought came to him that sometime in the future the commons of the city-room, the hen-coop, and the business office might assert their rights and force from these two barons something of the power that they were now seeking to wrest from him.

The crisis had come at last and found him weary of the great burden of responsibility and anxiety that he had carried for so many years. His first flame of indignation was already disappearing before

a feeling of profound relief as of one who seeks rest after a long day's toil. His first thought had been to discharge both men and take up the reins of power as they fell from their hands, but the thought of all that that meant in trouble and vexation, of the squabbles of minor office politicians and the probable treachery of those who might gain his favor appalled him. Seldom slow to act in the face of an emergency, the owner of the *Megaphone* viewed the matter from all its many sides during a few puffs of his cigarette and then rose to his feet and moved slowly toward the door, the two men watching him in breathless silence, not knowing whether the next minute would find them discharged from his employ or infinitely richer in money and authority than they had ever dreamed possible. Not until his hand was on the knob of the door did Barshfield turn and say, "Very well, I accept your proposition."

The bloodless revolution had been accomplished, but no accurate account of it has ever reached Park Row, though recitals of the vaguest rumors have moistened many a dry throat in the Brasserie of Hard Times. Ever so gently had the scion of the oldest and most powerful of the newspaper dynasties yielded to the demands of his barons and delegated to them the government of his kingdom. The scepter, the ermine, the crown—all the insignia of power—were still his, but henceforth he was no longer to rule, merely to reign.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE day that Kate Craven entered upon her new duties Penfield set himself to the task of getting something to do. But his reputation as a crafty, able, and unscrupulous politician had long preceded him, so that there was not a prime minister in all Park Row who was willing to give him employment; and few autocrats can successfully defy their prime ministers. Having carefully looked the field over, the deposed Sunday editor waited in dignified silence for an offer that he was sure must come, only to realize, with feelings of mortification and amazement, that nobody was anxious to claim his services.

Mrs. Chilton-Smythe advised him to take up magazine work. Her smile, as she said this, seemed friendly, as well it might, for she saw in fancy her latest portrait printed with a page of kindly eulogy in the department headed "Interesting People of the Moment."

Stirred by these generous emotions, she invited him to lunch with her and meet one of a group of financiers who had recently bought a moribund magazine in the belief that there was "big money in publishing." Now, it is a fact known only to a few of the most learned philosophers of the town that millionaires who are keener than ferrets while on the Stock Exchange can be made to believe almost anything if caught above Twenty-third Street. Their

wits seem to leave them one by one as they journey up-town, and have been known, in at least one instance, to vanish altogether near the lower end of Central Park. As Mrs. Chilton-Smythe lives in East Seventy-eighth Street, the financier was deeply impressed by Penfield's breezy talk and the assurance with which he spoke of "catching the public" as if it were a human piscatorial art of which he was the master. The rich one was also quick to accept the assurance of his hostess that this glib, healthy-looking young man had been "Barshfield's chief editor," and that that famous newspaper proprietor was even then at his wits' ends to replace him and save his own tottering throne. And when Penfield informed him in strict confidence that what every magazine needed was "new blood" the millionaire said to himself, "I have found the man," and hastened away to apprise his associates of his discovery. Within a fortnight Penfield had entered upon an entirely new phase of his career as the editor of *The Standard Monthly*. In accordance with the most cherished traditions of incompetency he hastened to change the shape, size, and make-up of the publication, and to alter the date of issue from the twenty-first to the nineteenth of the month, thus proving to his employers that he was a "live wire." Then he informed them that he was on the lookout for a "new Dooley or Kipling," and they resumed the pursuit of their natural prey in the narrow streets of the financial quarter happy in the belief that the new editor would shortly "make things hum" as he promised.

Penfield's first move was in the direction of that quicksand, so perilous to unaccustomed feet, called

"modern art." During his rambles in the region where well-advertised society and second-rate artists come together he had heard much about "virile" pictures painted by the "moderns," and had seen a number of paintings and drawings that were so fervently admired that he was ashamed to admit that they seemed to him simply hideous. Like most men of his selfish type, he was fond of the sweetly sentimental and preferred "Fast Asleep and Wide Awake" and "I'm Grandmama Now" to the best work of those great modern artists who have shown us the beauty of ugliness. But, realizing the necessity of displaying originality, he made the round of the studios and told the tenants thereof that he wanted something "virile" and "striking," in order that the *Standard* might become a dominant influence in the development of native art in its most modern form.

Now artists are not usually credited with business acumen, but in utilizing the waste products of their craft they are superior to the Standard Oil directors, and in an incredibly short space of time the news that an ignoramus had entered the picture-market had spread from Washington Square to Central Park. Next to painting a really good picture there is nothing that an artist enjoys more than selling a bad one, and what artist—no matter what his fame or ability—has not a few dismal failures sleeping in a portfolio or looking reproachfully on him from the studio wall? Quick to realize and appreciate the welcome opportunity, the wielders of the brush and charcoal poured in on the simple-minded Penfield and extolled the merits of their wares with an eloquence worthy of Daniel Webster, for, given a worthy

theme—such as their own merits—artists can indeed be eloquent. Never in the history of the town had such a number of atrociously bad pictures been unloaded on a single purchaser. Studio walls were stripped of their eyesores and dusty portfolios gave up their hideous and almost forgotten dead. Relieved of these ghastly reminders of hopes unfulfilled, and with spirits materially lightened by substantial checks—Penfield was liberal with other men's money—the illustrators returned to their legitimate work, and the old proverb about the ill wind blowing nobody good was once more verified.

To this day artists look back to the reign of Penfield as to a golden era of prosperity, while the writers of the town bless his name for his liberal purchase of their otherwise unsaleable wares. The decline of the great industry of "muck-raking" had left many of these with "exposures" of various industries on their hands, and these they were quick to unload on the *Standard*, solemnly assuring its editor that he was conducting the only real live magazine in the country.

Thus did Penfield become an humble instrument in the hands of Providence for the amelioration of the hard conditions against which art and letters maintain their ceaseless struggle for existence. But there is an end to all good things though the evils of life endure for ever. The steady decline of the *Standard's* circulation, at first brazenly attributed by its editor to his wise policy of "shaking down the deadwood so as to get to rock-bottom and build up," finally awakened the suspicions of its backers, who were of the class that hates to lose money except through the stock-market, and Penfield was replaced

by another incompetent who had caught their fancy by his learned conversation.

Meanwhile Kate had thrown herself into the work of enchaining the attention of the more intelligent members of her sex, with a zeal and discretion that soon caused a slight rising of the barometer in the circulation department. She dismissed from her mind all that she had learned in New York about the supposed likes and dislikes of women, and, assuming that her readers were as intelligent as herself, addressed herself to them as if they were reasoning human beings, and always from a distinctly feminine point of view. Her weekly articles on current plays and books were eagerly looked for by a rapidly increasing group of readers, and with good reason. Her familiarity with good literature gave her a perspective and a standard that made her criticisms of even the lightest of current fiction valuable and interesting to those who were in the habit of reading books attentively—the only ones she considered worth appealing to. To her essays in dramatic criticism she brought, instead of technical knowledge, a keen sympathy with and love of the theater, and an instinctive feeling for what is best and truest in dramatic art that enabled her to approach the stage in the spirit of a child anxious to secure the fullest measure of enjoyment, rather than as a blasé professional critic anxious to go home to bed. Moreover, she had never befogged her mind with essays on "The Intellectual Drama" or "The Need of a Municipal Theater" of the kind prepared by ignorant academicians for the benefit of those as stupid as themselves.

With this unusual equipment and a facile pen she

wrote a weekly column called "The Woman at the Play," that accurately reflected the sentiments of thousands of her own sex. With these two features established, she started a fashion column of such startling novelty that Lady Clara gasped with horror at its blasphemous violation of all that the Woman's Page has ever held sacred. In its columns she actually held up to ridicule the most glaring absurdities of fashion, and even went so far as to lampoon the sayings and doings of some of the best advertised of those semi-public women whom she had once believed in, but whom she now detested. This was done wittily, but in such a subtle manner that her victims were usually the last to learn that she was laughing at them. In this department Kate took a peculiar pride, for she had always resented the common masculine sneer at her sex for its supposed lack of all humorous perception. She had long believed that the feminine sense of humor was strong, especially in regard to matters relating to its own kind, and it was with the keenest delight that she undertook to prove the truth of her theory.

Kate Craven's wit was pungent with truth, as all real wit is, and the success of her reviews of fashion and its votaries was soon generally acknowledged. Barshfield was delighted with the results, and was quick to express his approval of the gentle ridicule of certain women who for years had harassed him for publicity. He even laughed when Mrs. Chilton-Smythe, having at last recognized herself in certain paragraphs which had afforded no small amusement to her friends, wrote an angry letter demanding the summary discharge of the offender.

"I think it's Miss Craven's turn now," he said to

Vanderlip; "and I'm rather glad to see that she has spunk enough to get even with that preposterous old cat for what she did to her last year."

And this remark Vanderlip hastened to repeat to Kate, for, in common with other journalists, he hated all semi-public women, even while printing puffs of them that the most honored traditions of Park Row might be upheld.

But Lady Clara was horror-stricken at the audacity of her young protégée. "It will never do in the world!" she cried. "Mrs. Chilton-Smythe is too strong with the throne for you to make fun of her. And besides, women don't like jokes against their own sex. We none of us like being laughed at."

"Of course women don't like those silly mother-in-law and old-maid jokes that the men think are so funny," retorted Kate; "there's nothing funny to us in the mother-in-law, because we know that in nine cases out of ten she burdens herself with the children. Nor do I see anything particularly amusing in a woman who can be happy though single. And it's just because we know too much to laugh at those stupid jokes that men say we've no sense of humor. But there are a lot of us who like to laugh at the preposterous members of our sex, and that is precisely the class I'm trying to reach and which no Woman's Page—not even your own—has ever taken into account."

To this extraordinary confession of faith in the intelligence, good taste, and truth-loving qualities of her sex—a blend which usually creates a sense of humor—Lady Clara listened in dumb amazement. If the ideas of this bright but immature young girl were true she might expect at any moment to see

the jerry-built edifice—"woman's stuff"—come tumbling down about her ears and her own occupation gone for ever.

"For God's sake, child," she implored, "don't tell any one of this discovery of yours! If you're right—and I don't say you're not—it means my finish. I'm too old to learn any new tricks. But you're wrong about Chilton-Smythe. Of course you and I know her and her woman's movement, but the *Megaphone* readers believe in her, and they don't like to see her ridiculed."

"Ever since I've been in Park Row," replied Kate, gently, "I've been hearing that we who write the newspapers know a great deal more than those who read them, but I've long since ceased to believe it. In fact, I'm beginning to think that it's just the other way and that the readers know more than the writers. Anyway, I'm tired of trying to fool them. It's sure to prove a losing game in the long run. You can always get a certain following by simply telling people the truth. That's the way men build up big reputations, but we women imagine that we can go on fooling all of the people, including ourselves, all of the time. I got an insight into Mrs. Chilton-Smythe's real character when she helped to get me fired, and I propose to get square with her just as if we were men instead of women. That's my idea of women's rights. And you can be quite sure that plenty of other women have found her out and are only too glad to see her put where she belongs."

All unknown to Kate Craven two persons in the town were following her course on the *Megaphone* with the liveliest sort of interest. Both Telford and

his mother read and chuckled over her amusing comments on the absurdities of fashionable life. It was Mrs. Telford who first saw that Mrs. Chilton-Smythe was being cleverly satirized, and the knowledge afforded her so much satisfaction that she showed the paper to a number of her friends, who in turn spoke of it to others, thus securing for it several regular buyers. It is in this fashion that newspaper circulation is built up. Had she known of this kindly interest on the part of Mrs. Telford, Kate would have been immeasurably gladdened and encouraged, for she had never forgotten the elder woman's courtesy to her nor the delightful evening she had passed at her home.

But kindly thoughts of the mother brought in their train thoughts of the son that were not kindly. Although she believed herself to have adopted the tactics of a man in her progress toward success, she still cherished a feminine animosity toward the man who had first told her the plain truth in regard to her infatuation for Floodmere. That subsequent events had proved him to have been right only intensified her resentment. Nor could she put him out of her mind, no matter how hard she tried. And yet she fully realized her enormous obligation to him for friendly counsel and assistance, and, above all, for showing her the difference between the real New York and the city of her dreams. In time, she thought, they might become friends again, but their growing intimacy had received a check from which it could never recover.

Of course the number of readers gained by Kate's new and novel brand of "woman's stuff" was a very small element in the prodigious sum of the *Mega-*

phone's circulation; but it was the very element that Barshfield prized very highly and found it difficult to get. The circulation manager, watching the sales as a hen her brood, noted a slight increase here and there in what he called "the silk-stocking district," and by shrewd questioning of the newsdealers learned that the new buyers were chiefly women, which fact he duly reported to his employer.

As Kate usually left the office early in the afternoon, while Telford did not arrive until four, she saw nothing of him; but one Friday night she returned to make some alterations in her page, and it was not until after twelve that she started for home. The wind was blowing and rain was falling in fierce torrents as, facing both, she marched toward the subway station with her umbrella held in front of her, little dreaming that Fate was treading close behind. Suddenly her foot slipped and she found herself seated on the wet pavement with the waters apparently rising about her. As she tried to rise she felt herself aided by two strong arms, and, on turning, found herself face to face with that Fate in the person of Ernest Telford. It would be hard to say which of the two was more surprised, for the rewrite-man, occupied with his own reflections, had not recognized in the cloaked and dripping figure in front of him the girl who was so seldom absent from his thoughts. Kate, being a woman, was the first to recover herself. With a few words of thanks she lifted her umbrella again and was about to continue her journey when a sharp pain in her ankle brought her to a standstill.

"You're hurt," said Telford, quickly, and with a note of anxious sympathy in his voice to which she was not insensible.

"I'm afraid I am," she said. "but I shall be all right in another minute."

Telford's reply took the form of a summons to a prowling cabman, and, as the ramshackle vehicle drew up at the curb, he lifted her bodily in his arms and carried her to its open door. It was the first time in all her life that she had been carried thus in a man's arms; but it never occurred to her to resist. On the contrary, the sudden transition from the cold, wet pavement to the warm security of his close embrace was infinitely soothing to her soul. The distance to the curb was but half a dozen steps, but it was long enough to melt her antagonism and bring to her mind the vague thought that it would be good to be thus borne and sheltered for all time. And at the same moment Telford felt all his starved heart-hunger return a thousand times stronger than ever before, together with the feeling that the place for this girl was in his arms and that to him belonged the right to love and cherish and guard her. Passively and with her weary eyes closed, Kate allowed him to place her on the cushioned seat. She heard him give the order to the driver and then he was beside her, the door closed, and the cab in motion. It had all been sudden and unlooked for, and now she began to feel weak and dependent and ready to cry. Then his arm slipped around her so easily and naturally that it seemed to belong there, and, unconsciously, she leaned against his shoulder and quietly wept from pure happiness.

It was an old-fashioned coupé drawn by a weary old horse, but they both found the journey up-town far too short for all that they had to say to each other. There were moments when Kate was glad

they were not in a hansom with a trap-door in the roof for the driver to peek through, but long before she reached home even that would not have disturbed her. By that time Telford had broken down her last feeling of resentment and swept her into his heart by sheer force of his love. The storm that raged without was nothing in comparison with the torrent of words—incoherent perhaps, but none the less sweet and tender—and the smothering kisses which told her all that her heart could wish to know. Forgotten were her wounded feelings of the past months; forgotten also the pain in her ankle—how she did bless that fortunate hurt!—forgotten everything except the supreme joy of loving and being loved, and knowing that her barque had passed the last of the rocks and shoals and quicksands and come into safe anchorage at last.

Leaning heavily on the arm that was henceforth to support and protect her, Kate reached her room, and, refusing to allow him to send for a doctor, bade Telford good night and aroused Lady Clara, who, attired in her scarlet kimono, bound up the injured member in bandages soaked in liniment and then tucked her comfortably away in bed, asking no questions but shrewdly suspecting much, for Kate seemed radiantly happy in spite of her injury, and smilingly refused to say who had brought her home.

As for Telford, he overpaid the cabman with a smile of seraphic joy on his face that made that dripping and blanketed night-hawk wish that he had charged him twice as much. For nearly an hour he sat in his dimly lighted dining-room smoking and thinking. And in this moment of quiet communion with himself his thoughts went back to that other

evening many years ago, when, as a young Harvard graduate and the only son of a rich and highly placed man, he had offered himself to and been accepted by the ambitious young girl whose only dower was her beauty. He recalled with vivid distinctness his feelings as he sat before the wood-fire in his father's luxurious library far into the night, intoxicated with his triumph and anxious for the morning to dawn that all the world—meaning the little one in which he moved—might envy him his good fortune. And what were those feelings? Analyzing them now in the light of later and riper knowledge he realized that what he had mistaken for love was largely vanity and egotism. He had said to her, "I love you!" and it had appeared to him—such is the splendid selfishness of raw youth—that nothing more was needed to make the union an ideal one. That she could help loving him was not imaginable. He scarcely gave the matter a second thought. Swelling his pride still further was the knowledge that out of many who had wooed he alone had been chosen. He remembered how, in the fullness of his triumph, he had felt a certain pity for one of the unsuccessful ones and had hoped that he might in due time find some one who would make him happy. It was for this one's wedding-gift that he had afterward saved and scrimped even while hating him. He pitied him now.

Of course, mingled with his vanity and egotism there had been the wish to make this early love of his supremely happy. What more could woman ask than such a love as his, backed with social position and wealth? Their home should be in the country—she would soon learn to love rural life as

much as he did—and they would spend their honeymoon abroad, not, as she suggested, in Paris and London, where she had never been, but in distant countries that he had always wished to visit. Yes, he would allow nothing to stand in the way of her happiness—that is, nothing that he really wanted himself.

These retrospections brought a smile to his face now, for, since those far-off days, disappointment and self-privation and anxiety had taught him the lesson that is never learned in college, and he knew the true meaning of life and love. (There should be a chair of each one of these important branches of learning in every university in the land.) He was not thinking exultantly now of his love for the woman he had won, but, with humility and a sense of his own unworthiness, of the wonderful fact that she had condescended to love him. By what acts of self-sacrifice could he ever repay her for the priceless gift that she had bestowed upon him? For his was the love of middle-age, purified and exalted by years of self-abnegation—a love far deeper and stronger than the blend of vanity and selfishness that the playwrights and novelists call youthful affections, and about which all human sympathy and interest are supposed to cluster.

Meanwhile Kate slept, and it is fair to presume that her dreams were happy. But no dream, no matter how rosy, was a more hopeful augury for her future happiness than that of her middle-aged lover wondering, humbly, reverently, and gratefully, how he should make her happy.

Lady Clara, awakened by the ringing of the telephone bell at what seemed to her an unearthly hour

in the morning, heard Telford's voice inquiring for Kate, and understood it all in the space of a flash of lightning. Years of experience in what she called the "heart-interest end of things" had given her a supernaturally keen scent for a love affair, and she went back to her bed with tear-dimmed eyes, her simple soul aglow with sympathy and happiness. Kate awoke to find her standing beside her bed, a breakfast-tray in her hands, her face radiant with joy.

"Darling!" she cried, "I'm too delighted to think straight! Sit up and tell me all about it! But first eat this nice breakfast I've fixed for you. I knew the day you dressed up for him that something was going to come of it; and he's just the loveliest man in all Park Row, and sure to make you happy."

By this time Kate had come back from the land of dreams, and was wondering what had happened to make her spirits so light and her foot so sore. Lady Clara's incoherent rhapsody was still ringing in her ears as if it had been part of her dreams; but before she could separate the vision from the real a sudden recollection of the night before swept through her mind, blotting out all other thoughts and bringing the quick color to her cheeks. Could that be real or was it only a dream? It must be true, because here was Lady Clara standing beside her bed telling her how glad she was. But how in the world could she have found out? Kate knew perfectly well that she herself had not told her, for, as she remembered now, she had gone to sleep hugging her precious secret close to her breast in the hope of dreaming over it, as a young mother might sleep and dream with her infant in her arms. In what mys-

terious fashion, then, had this weaver of "heart-interest" stories probed her inmost thoughts?

"See here," she cried, sitting up in bed, "how in the world did you find out about it? I certainly told you nothing last night, and yet here you are offering your congratulations just as if you knew all that happened."

Just then the telephone rang again, and Kate leaped out of bed and rushed to answer the call.

"That's the way I found out," cried Lady Clara; but the other scarcely heard her, so eager was she to listen to her lover's voice. She even forgot her bandaged ankle until a sharp pain changed her run into a hop and brought her up standing on one leg like a stork with the receiver in her hand and her face shining with pure joy as the language of love came floating over the wire: "Yes, yes!" she answered. "Always and for ever!"

Assured on this point, Telford went on to explain why he had called her up at such an early hour: "I was so much occupied last night in telling you how much I loved you and discussing other irrelevant matters, that I entirely forgot to say what I had intended to say regarding a project which is still uppermost in my mind. I want you to marry me. Will you?"

"Why, I thought that was all understood between us," replied Kate, innocently.

"Then may I come and hear it from your own lips? I sha'n't believe it until I do."

"Certainly! Come at once! I'll be dressed by that time. Where are you? At home?"

"No, I'm in the hotel next door."

Kate felt a foolish thrill at the thought of her lover's nearness.

"Oh, you mustn't come yet!" she cried. "Give me half an hour and then come."

"Very well, but don't keep me a second later," replied Telford. "By the way, there's another thing I wanted to ask you. How is your ankle?"

"Better, thank you. Now don't you be late!"

Lady Clara had no wings, except in a metaphorical sense, but she could fly better than she could keep such a secret as that which she carried in her broad bosom that morning. She opened her desk at eleven o'clock, and five minutes later the news was spreading through the office and overflowing into the Brasserie of Hard Times, and thence into every city-room in Park Row. The various hen-coops buzzed with the exciting intelligence, the editorial staff of the *Megaphone* marveled at it, and Macy and Vanderlip, who but yesterday would have met in secret session to decide whether or no such an alliance could be regarded as a menace to themselves, honestly rejoiced. Telford, arriving at the office at his usual hour that afternoon, was thunderstruck to find a bouquet of roses tied with white ribbon lying on his desk, and the members of the staff waiting to congratulate him. Never before had he known news to fly so fast. Even Tops grinned knowingly when he came to summon him to the royal presence.

Barshfield rose as he entered and held out his hand with even more than his usual cordiality. "If what I hear is true, Mr. Telford, I offer my heartiest congratulations," he said, pleasantly. Then he continued in the serious manner that he always assumed when making a new arrangement with one of his

staff: "I have been thinking lately that you might like to do work of a better sort than re-writing. How would you like to make a change?"

Yesterday Telford would have taken fright at the suggestion, but now the prospect of bettering his fortunes was a most welcome one, for, true lover that he was, he was eager to earn all he could for the woman who had promised to become his wife.

"Think it over," continued Barshfield, before the other could reply. "Of course the salary will change for the better as well as the job."

All this friendly interest was very pleasant to the rewrite-man, who had never sought intimacy with any of his associates, but on the other hand had never tried to advance himself over their heads. Now he began to have a feeling of positive affection for the men and women among whom he had toiled for so many years, and unconsciously he imparted some of his own buoyancy to the copy he rewrote that night. The magic yeast of love was at work clearing away some of the corroding cynicism from his heart and giving freer play to the gentler spirit underneath.

CHAPTER XXX

A FEW weeks later there was a wedding in the ivy-hung down-town church where the Telfords had worshiped—when they worshiped at all—for many decades. Mrs. Craven and Mrs. Telford occupied the front pew, and Lady Clara, looking distinctly out of place in the sacred edifice—she wore a recent gift of Mr. Blumenstein's of the well-known firm of that name—sat directly across the aisle and sniffled audibly during the ceremony. The church was comfortably filled with friends and relatives of the Telfords, besides the Marshalls, Macy, Vanderlip, and even Barshfield himself—a rare piece of courtesy on the part of the last-named, and one that gave to the contracting pair a distinct *cachet* in the eyes of Park Row.

Both Kate and her husband were deeply touched by the generosity of their friends. Not only did Macy and Vanderlip contribute to their silver-chest, but the "office" indicated its esteem by sending a complete set of knives, forks, and spoons.

"We've had another gift that I haven't told you about," said Telford, as they were driving to the railway station. "Barshfield called me into his room yesterday to say that Penhallow had resigned—"

"And you're to be dramatic critic!" cried Kate, joyfully. "Oh, I'm so glad! It's what you've al-

ways wanted, and now I can go to the theater as much as I want to and to first nights, too!"

Her cup of happiness was indeed running over.

My tale is drawing to its logical and what I regard as a satisfying close, and yet the most difficult part of my task lies before me, for I must prove that my heroine has attained the very best that New York has to offer despite the ugly fact that she has married a comparatively poor man. So conspicuously do the advantages of wealth and fashion loom in the popular imagination, so insistently are they dwelt on by writers of fiction, so constantly are they exploited in conversation, and so bitter is the envy they excite in breasts which should know only contentment, that I seriously doubt my ability to show that the town has anything else of real value to offer.

That wealth has not completely hardened the hearts of its possessors is shown by their enormous benefactions. But it is equally true that money blunts the keen edge of appreciation and robs its possessors of much of the enjoyment of life. His must be a rare character who can derive keen pleasure from Keats or a joke or a sunset and count dollars in a bag at the same time. In all the varied life of New York there is no phase less interesting than its wealth and fashion. Its votaries admit their own social inferiority by the eagerness with which they seek the acquaintance of even the least distinguished toilers in the vineyard of arts and letters. It is needless to speak here of the load of anxiety, responsibility, and annoyance that wealth carries on its shoulders. It dare not show its head, even as a

generous benefactor, for fear of becoming a target for abuse, ridicule, and "muck-raking." In no community that I know of is the stalled ox less palatable; in none can a dinner of herbs be eaten with greater satisfaction and contentment.

And yet I doubt if Kate Telford appreciates the number and value of her many blessings any more than she comprehends the real nature of the quicksands and pitfalls that she has escaped in her venturesome journey from her mother's side to her present safe anchorage. Of the many things that contribute to her happiness not one was visible as she first approached the city and noted with eager joy the ruddy overhanging glare. Not for her are automobiles, costly entertainments, and rich furs and jewels, nor the mob of brilliant women, interesting men, trust magnates, captains of industry, and leaders of fashion who stood out so conspicuously in her old dreams. An infinitely better fortune is hers, for she loves and is loved by a high-minded, honorable gentleman, who, seeing with a marvelously clear vision, can show her the difference between the true and the false, between that which is really worth having and the empty vanities for which misguided men and women sacrifice their best energies.

That she should continue to work diligently at her calling instead of abandoning herself to idleness and diversion may seem strange to those who cannot divorce happiness from money-spending in their dreams of life. In these dreams the sports of the idle rich loom large, but in the real life of the town those who live only for amusement rust like pianos at the seashore. Our brisk climate makes activity necessary to happiness.

Moreover, Kate's work, like Telford's, is of a kind that seldom palls. To one really fond of the theater, the first night of a new play has a perennial charm, and the more we learn of the stage the keener our interest in a new production with all its possibilities of noteworthy success or ludicrous failure. Added to this is the sense of responsibility that goes with it —the opportunity to be the first to announce the appearance of a new star in the theatrical firmament or to hold up to just ridicule the pretentiously bad actor or the dramatist whose work is drawn from the treasure-house of a mature memory. After more than a third of a century of professional theater-going, I can truthfully say that a first night is one of the few pleasures of my youth that have preserved their charm.

In addition to the rare privilege of earning a liberal salary through work that she enjoys, Kate's life is one of remarkable felicity. In the office, as well as in their home, she and her husband swim safely in a little eddy of their own, where the water is always smooth,—no matter how fiercely the storms of rivalry, jealousy, political manœuvring, or social striving may rage outside. Barshfield likes their work, and Macy and Vanderlip—now secure themselves—know that the new combination can do them no harm and the paper, in which both hold stock, much good. Relieved of the cares of housekeeping by the elder Mrs. Telford—the crabbed mother-in-law is merely the comic relief of the mirage—Kate has time to continue her own work and to assist her husband in his, and their combined earnings enable them to live in comfort and without the perpetual scrimping that so often sends love

flying out of the window. More than one wife would cheerfully exchange her rich, stingy, and inquisitive husband for the financial independence which Kate Telford enjoys.

Telford, brought up as the son of a rich father, has long since put away all dreams of wealth, and is content to enjoy the good things that the gods provide, among which is a social position so strongly rooted that he can share it with his wife. And social position is a matter of supreme importance to a woman in a small village as well as in a large city, and nowhere is it of greater value than in this noisy town which would be unbearable were it not for some of the people who live within its gates.

The term "getting into society" is generally used to signify the manner in which vulgarians push their way into drawing-rooms where they are tolerated rather than wanted, and in New York this is not the difficult achievement that successful pushers would have us believe. It is largely a question of tireless patience, an infinite capacity for being bored, and a willingness to pay with smiling face for tickets of admittance to the chambers of boredom. The golden gates swing far more easily than those who gaze from afar believe. The dwellers within are for the most part kindly, good-natured folk who live to be amused, and will smile rather than frown upon any one who can make them laugh. The bitterness of the dreary London climb is almost unknown in New York. But to get out of society and still maintain a hold on the best that it offers is not an easy matter, and this the Telfords—mother and son—had contrived to do. Their financial reverses had had the beneficial effect of scraping off the social barnacles

that had attached themselves to them during the years of their prosperity, leaving only stanch friends of the kind that regard misfortune as a tie that binds rather than as an excuse for neglect.

Neither on Broadway nor Fifth Avenue did the newly wedded couple set up their household gods, but in a down-town cross-street, where they obtained at a modest rental sunlight, fresh air, and quiet, three of the most costly urban luxuries and less conspicuous in the great mirage than are a sound digestion and a good set of teeth in the undergraduate dream of life.

Knowing that true social position is founded not on the people with whom one scrapes acquaintance, but on the undesirables who are avoided, the wise Telford leased an apartment up two flights of stairs in a house without an elevator.

"I am doing this," he explained to his wife, "in order to strengthen our social position. Anybody will go up in an elevator, but the only people who will consent to climb stairs in New York are your friends, and each flight keeps out just so many bores, society pushers, and others of the vast army who are 'on the make.' Were my only ambition a social one I would live on the roof."

To Lady Clara, who expressed the fear of her simple heart that "smart people" might neglect to call, he made answer: "Smartness is the cheapest thing in this town. All it costs is money."

He giveth His beloved sleep. He giveth also, and —such is His mercy and loving-kindness—even unto the unregenerate, an infinite capacity for laughter. And among those thus blessed are to be found the disciples of subcutaneous thought, a school of phi-

losophy in which the processes of meditation begin well below the hair-roots. Only to these chosen ones has been given the priceless joy of splendid laughter as the various idiocies of the town unfold themselves before their gaze. Nor is theirs the hollow throat cackle of those who laugh at what they are incapable of understanding, but the honest laughter of soul, mind, and diaphragm—laughter that is tempered with a grateful reverence for a merciful Providence which offers so much for the exclusive delectation of the wise.

To this school of thought Telford belonged, and by virtue of its teachings he was able to show his wife—a quick and eager student—when to laugh and when to weep. The strange fetich of "knowing desirable people" he regarded very much as a devout Christian looks upon the worship of graven images—badly graven at that. For years he had been able to pick and choose his friends from the eddying currents of metropolitan life, and these formed the nucleus of one of the most agreeable circles that it has ever been my fortune to know.

Telford was, of course, far too decent to fatten famous players, singers, and authors with puffery and then invite them to his home that they might serve as bait for persons of social prominence; but he had friends in the dramatic profession, as well as among artists and writers, who were well worth knowing and were above currying favor for the sake of puffs or taking offense at criticism. Of course no imitation actors like Floodmere and Roberta Rowenna were ever sought by the Telfords, no matter how high the esteem in which they were held in the best society for their bad acting. Equally unpopular with

them were those solemn and important ones who talk of nothing but themselves, their "art," the indignities they have suffered at the hands of the critics, and the manner in which somebody else played the part or painted the picture. The young woman who was going from society to the stage, and was therefore in need of a kindly word of encouragement, was also absent from their revels; nor was there ever any place for the great army of the whining, the misunderstood, the neglected, and the unappreciated children of genius. From the very first they made it a rule that nobody should tell a hard-luck story on their premises. Nor was it permitted to wear a look of patient martyrdom of the kind that calls for sympathy.

Telford delighted in warning his wife against the many social pests that infest the town, and made plain to her the various earmarks by which each one could be distinguished. He put her on her guard against the self-seeking flatterer, and him who is always laughing above his collar-button, thus indicating to the trained sense that he wants something. Above all did he warn her against the male society pusher or climber. "He is like a porch-climber," he said, "because, like those other pushers, he is trying to enter houses where he is not wanted. Climbing may sometimes be pardoned in a woman, but a male climber is a wrong 'un every time."

A great many of their friends were good talkers, and their Sunday-night suppers soon acquired so much local fame that Miss Smithers was not ashamed to manœuver in her guileless way for an invitation. Telford laughed heartily when this was brought to his ears, but Kate declared her wish to oblige her.

"Only this once, Ernest, dear!" she pleaded. "I do so want to show her that I'm somebody in the line of her own ambition. Besides, she was always nice to me, and not at all like that horrid Chilton-Smythe woman who got me fired from the *Megaphone*, and whose picture will never get in there again except over my dead body. I'll ask Miss Smithers for next Sunday, and we'll have guests for her special benefit."

Telford gave a grudging consent, not because he sympathized with his wife's harmless vanity, but because he had not been married long enough to refuse her anything. Miss Smithers, who knew so little of social ethics that she had been known to invite one well-connected Englishman to meet another in the ingenuous belief that the *rencontre* would prove pleasing to both, cheerfully climbed the two flights of stairs and was sufficiently well bred to finish her panting on the upper landing so as to enter with a serene and smiling face. The celebrities invited for her special benefit delighted her soul, and she was amazed to note that they did not either all talk at once or else maintain a sulky silence. For the first time in her life she saw an eminent singer enter a drawing-room without either his hostess's check or a certificated sore throat on his person.

And so it came to pass that, entering the great mirage and traveling by a circuitous and often perilous road, Kate Craven found at last in the real city such contentment, happiness, and usefulness as she had never dreamed of. The New York in which she dwells is not the city of the very rich and the very poor, the gloriously happy Four Hundred and a

Wall Street paved with gold, but the real New York of the cross-streets, where it is still possible to live within one's means in quiet dignity and comfort, heedless of what others may spend and undisturbed by the rumbling of the sight-seeing coach or the chattering of the monkeys in the trees. Of the many vain dreams and ambitions which she brought with her to the city, only the desire to do something for women survives. And, seeing clearly now, she no longer devotes herself to the exploitation of the self-seeking, but writes for her own sex, wisely, temperately, and with a respect for feminine intelligence that has won for her a wide circle of readers.

I often wonder if she appreciates the blessings of her lot.

THE END

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